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EGYPTIAN WOMEN [IN CAIRO]:
STRUGGLES FOR IDENTITY AND CITIZENSHIP

BY

SUSAN MARGARET BELCHER EL-NAHHAS ©

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY STUDIES

Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

SPRING 1999

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Degree:	Doctor of Philosophy
Year Granted:	1999

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DATE: April 9, 1999

*Epigraph

The patriarchal class system has robbed the woman of her most precious possession, namely her mind, and has replaced it with the hymen. The woman has been deprived of her capacity for mental, psychological, and even physical creativity. Her capacity for child-bearing and her creative human motherhood have been transformed into bonds, burdens, and agony, all of which exhaust and weaken her, rather than strengthen or develop her abilities.
Nawāl as-Sayyid as-Sa'dāwī (1997:222)

In colonial relations, identification can operate, at once, as the ontological privilege of the colonizer and the subjugated condition of the colonized. Racial identity and racist practice alike are forged through the bonds of identification...The colonized are constrained to impersonate the image the colonizer offers them of themselves; they are commanded to imitate the colonizer's version of their essential difference. Diana Fuss (1995:14;146).

A general State education is a mere contrivance for moulding people to be exactly like one another, and as the mould in which it casts them is that which pleases the predominant power in the government, whether this be a monarch, a priesthood, an aristocracy, or the majority of the existing generation; in proportion as it is efficient and successful, it establishes a despotism over the mind...John Stuart Mill (On Liberty, 1800)

...[T]he class which is the ruling material force of a society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production...hence among other things [they] rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of ideas and their age...Karl Marx and Friedrick Engels (The German Ideology, 1846)

Seeing what is wrong does not require knowing what is right. Kevin Harris (1979:169)

While education is set up by the power élites to serve their own interests, it is hardly likely that they would voluntarily relinquish their hold – or allow the conditions to develop that would threaten their hold over education, and thus over people's consciousness...The problem that remains, of course, is how to...expose a constantly and carefully legitimated view of the world as an illusion, and so help people to correct the distortions that now make up their consciousness. Kevin Harris (1979:183;189)

---

*These quotations belong at the beginning of Chapter Eight Conclusion, but are not politically correct for the committee.

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a dissertation entitled, EGYPTIAN WOMEN: STRUGGLES FOR IDENTITY AND CITIZENSHIP, submitted by Susan Margaret Belcher El-Nahhas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in Sociology of Education, Department of Educational Policy Studies.

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April 9, 1999

Date approved by committee

Dedication

Whatever glimpses of truth this dissertation contains, I would like to dedicate to the Egyptian women who were the respondents and informants in this study. In addition, I dedicate this effort to my daughters, Amy and Jasmine, who will have to live their lives as Anglo-Egyptians, for better or for worse, in a racist, patriarchal, capitalist world.

Preface

It's been a long struggle from St. Paul's Road, Tottenham. Thanks to my grandparents and parents, I have defied the English class system and succeeded where most have never dared to tread.

Although Canada's class system is less moribund than England's, who you know is still much more important than what you know. Even though sponsors willing to support a working class woman are few and far between, I have been fortunate in having some who have proven to be generous mentors and even friends.

After completing my Master's Degree in a hostile climate typical of our patriarchal capitalist society, I managed to persevere at the margins of academia, catching crumbs that fell off the table of largesse. Despite paternalistic mutterings about why a "bored housewife" like me (??!!) would want to pursue an academic career, I have deepened my understanding of patriarchal capitalism and managed to teach courses, give papers at conferences and public fora, and even publish articles. Watching young, middle class white men bypass me because they were being sponsored into plum positions by established, male academics, I resisted total marginalization. I also resisted the overt posturing by most men and some women, designed to discourage me and other "intruders" from contemplating pursuit of the doctorate, though this poisoning of academia did slow me down substantially.

My progress in the doctoral program was quite remarkable, considering that: I passed my comprehensive examinations ten months after starting the doctoral program; I spent more than nine months of field work in Egypt collecting the data; I collected so much data that it took me six months to finalize the code book, more than nine months to verify, organize, and recode the data, and one year to write twelve hundred pages, all the while recuperating from poor health brought on by the harsh realities of life in Egypt. Furthermore, I spent another eighteen months narrowing the focus of the thesis and drastically editing the text to satisfy the demands of committee members, particularly the external examiner. Several totally different dissertations have been written and abandoned in this process, though I will now publish them on my own terms and at my leisure.

This long period of rewriting was the most painful part, since much of my knowledge about classical Arabic, Middle Eastern studies and Egyptian society as well as much of my actual field work is no longer visible in the dissertation. Most of the historical and contemporary socio-political-economic context has been gutted to maintain a narrower focus and pacify the external examiner who lacks expertise in these areas. Even with the current focus, much of the empirical data has been deleted. My goal of providing a voice to the respondents has been only partially realized in the data chapters. Much of the data has been "laundered" to render it more "politically correct", to reflect the interests and biases of the committee members and to pacify the external examiner who disagreed with much of what respondents reported. Another painful aspect of this process is that I was almost entirely silenced and removed from the dissertation. My thirty-five years of experience with Egyptians and thirty year marriage to an Egyptian have been rendered unimportant, irrelevant, and unrecognized.

The final work is, thus, a product of the compromises necessary for finalizing a dissertation given the hierarchical and authoritarian nature of the university. I have learned from this process that: patriarchal and capitalist ideologies underlie and characterize the structure and nature of social relations in academia as much as society in general. Unfortunately, individuals from marginalized groups recreate oppressive and exploitative relationships once they gain power over others. Being an academic does not mean one is an intellectual, and I have been at the mercy of an ideologue. Thus, I renounce this dissertation as an alien monstrosity and I do not wish to be associated with it.

Abstract

Fifty-one Egyptian women, from all social groups and classes, living in the greater Cairo region during 1993-94 were intensively and extensively interviewed to ascertain their conceptualization of female identity ("femininity") as well as the status, rights, and roles of women in Egyptian society. Photographs of billboards depicting images of women were used as a projective device research instrument to elicit respondents' views about women. Contradictions between conceptualization and operation of gender by respondents were also investigated. In addition, implications for the socio-economic development of Egyptian society were also explored. Seeking both emic and etic knowledge, the study utilized many research paradigms and methodologies, including participant observation, symbolic interactionism, naturalistic inquiry, case studies, and hermeneutics common in ethnography; but it is also informed by feminist scholarship and critical modernism, reflecting the critical realist position of the author. Categories of gender conceptualization as well as themes emerged from the data and reflect those used by respondents. Although not in the original research design, respondents intertwined ethnic, racial and national identity with that of female identity ("femininity). Respondents identified gender identity not only as a normative concept, but also as an evaluative concept. The images of women found on billboards in the greater Cairo region during this period were overwhelmingly negative. Respondents not only complained about the demonization of women in the billboards, but also about the foreign (Western) identity of most of the women depicted and the virtual absence of ordinary, Egyptian women. Respondents linked this phenomenon to the current power struggle between the secularized, Westernized ruling comprador elites and many disenchanted and marginalized people from the lower-middle and middle classes who have turned to Islamic

fundamentalism for salvation in this life. Violation of cultural taboos in the mass media as well as by ordinary people in everyday life was met with mixed reaction amongst respondents, as was the projection of Western images and norms. Several competing conceptualizations of the ideal beauty and of Egyptian femininity were found to be related to class, region of origin, and interpretation of religion. Age, ethnicity, number and sex of siblings, education, marital status, and parental status were found to have secondary, indirect influence.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I would like to acknowledge my supervisor, Dr. Anne Marie Decore, without whose support, I would have not even entered the doctoral program. Since my decision to pursue the Ph.D., Dr. Decore has been very supportive. I thank her for the guidance as well as the time, effort, and concern she has given me. This dissertation reflects her work.

I would also like to acknowledge the other members of my supervisory committee, Dr. Patricia Rooke and Prof. John Rowland Young for reading the dissertation and the feedback and encouragement they have provided. The timing of my oral defense has been particularly difficult for Dr. Rooke, and I thank her for accommodating me from beyond retirement and beyond Alberta! Thanks also to Prof. Young for remaining on the committee beyond his retirement and his chairing of the oral defense.

I would also like to thank Dr. Earle Waugh and Dr. Swee-hin Toh for agreeing to be examiners and reading the dissertation.

I have been fortunate to have many wonderful teachers who have inspired me to pursue excellence in all that I undertake. I will not try to name them all as I did in my Master's Thesis, because I would probably miss someone. To them all, thank you.

Several colleagues and friends have graciously read previous versions of this dissertation and provided feedback which has been valuable to me. Here, I will dare to name them and hope that I have not left anyone out: Dr. Amin Malak, Dr. Alan Segal, Dr. Rachad Antonius, Mr. Malcolm Azania, Dr. Finola Fogarty, Ms Patricia Fuller-Hughes, Dr. Margaret Haughey, Dr. Nancy Lovell, Dr. Debra Shogan, Dr. David Bai, and Dr. Peggy Wilson.

Discussions held with other friends and colleagues have also contributed to my better understanding of this project and completion of the dissertation. I would like to thank Ms Yolande Geadah and Mr. Sabri Abou-Ward for their feedback about Egyptian women, Egyptian culture, and Egyptian society in general. I would also like to thank Ms Gloria Filax and Ms Jenny Kelly for their discussions with me about "identity".

Great thanks are also due to Dr. Muhammad Deeb, who was my Arabic teacher more than thirty years ago, and to Dr. Amin Malak, a friend and colleague, for their assistance in the transliteration of Arabic. Their patience and thoughtful help is greatly appreciated, though I take full responsibility for any errors which remain. Thanks also to Dr. Shaherazade Nadia Torrens and Ms Soraya Hafez for their assistance in transliteration of Arabic words.

I would also like to thank Mr. Doug Elves for scanning and cropping the photographs of billboards used in this research. Although the computerized images of these photographs have not been used in the dissertation because of the numerous technical difficulties encountered, Doug's efforts have been greatly appreciated. Thanks to Ms Carrie Calvert, Sociology Department Librarian, for her assistance. Thanks to Mr. Clifford Kinzel of the

Sociology Department Population Laboratory for his kind assistance with the coding of the data and its manipulation with SPSS.

Along with the intellectual support, I have also benefited from the friendship of Prof. Joyce Relyea, Dr. Peter Mayo, and Dr. Shaherazade Nadia Torrens. Though my social life has been put on hold for some five years, the encouragement they have provided, much of it at a distance in Peter's case, has been important to me.

I also would like to thank my daughters, Ms Amy Rashida El-Nahhas and Ms Jasmine Corrinna El-Nahhas, for reading earlier drafts of this dissertation and their feedback. Considering their busy lives and long commutes from abroad, I am fortunate they did this during more than one busy holiday. Thanks also to my mother, Amy C. Belcher, for reading portions of the thesis and her support of this project. From her, I gained my thirst for knowledge as well as my love of ancient Egyptian culture.

I could not have undertaken the doctoral program nor the field work in Egypt required for this dissertation without the financial, intellectual, and emotional sacrifices and support of my husband, Yehia El-Nahhas. I thank him for his support, and particularly for all the cheese sandwiches he brought to me while I worked diligently at the computer for years on end. Now that I am finished, we can rediscover normal life as a married couple!

Many people have facilitated my research in Egypt. At the risk of missing one of them, I would like to thank Dr. Rachad Antonius for arranging unconditional and unlimited access to all the facilities of the American University in Cairo, for graciously providing me with office space, and for a myriad of other types of kind assistance both in Egypt and Canada; the Dean of the Faculty of Mass Communications for arranging unconditional and unlimited access to all the facilities of Cairo University; the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture for his assistance; Dr. Khairy 'Aboul-Seoud for all the time, advice, assistance, and most of all the transportation and company on many of my Cairo commutes; Dr. Cynthia Nelson for her advice; Dr. Fathi Maqlad for his generous contribution of time, advice, facilitation, and company; to Layla for welcoming me into my mother-in-law's clan and facilitating my research; to my sisters-in-law, Madame "R" and Dr. "S", for all the wonderful dinners, company, and other support for my stay in Cairo as well as my research; to my brother-in-law, Dr. "L" for his hospitality, and to my brother-in-law, Col. "M", who rescued me on many occasions and who made sure that my stay in Cairo was as comfortable and as productive as possible. There are many others whom I would like to thank anonymously to protect their positions and perhaps even their lives. This includes several men who graciously agreed to be my male guardian so that I would not be a damsel in distress and that I would be taken seriously so that I could obtain the information I was seeking.

Last but not least of all, I would like to thank all the informants, numbering over three hundred, and the fifty-one respondents who participated in this study. Without them, there would be no study. Though they cannot be identified, their voices can be heard through this dissertation, however muffled. Given the lack of leisure time in your busy lives, I thank you all for making time for me.

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Transliteration of Arabic

The system of transliteration used in this dissertation is that used at Cambridge University. See David Cowan, Modern Literary Arabic, Cambridge University Press, 1964.

Arabic Letter	Transliteration	Arabic Letter	Transliteration
ا + ء	’ (+ a, i, or u)	ه	h
ب	b	ة	h
ت	t	و	w
ث	th	ي	y
ج	j or g	ئ	’a
ح	h	ؤ	ū
خ	kh	آ	’ā
د	d	يّ	īy
ذ	dh		
ر	r		
ز	z		
س	s		
ش	sh		
ص	ṣ		
ض	ḍ		
ط	ṭ		
ظ	ẓ		
ع	‘		
غ	gh		
ف	f		
ق	q		
ك	k		
ل	l		
م	m		
ن	n		

Chapter One
Situating the Problematic

> **Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without the understanding of both. C. Wright Mills (1959)**

I. Background and General Overview of the Study

A. Introduction: Outlining the Problematic

How do Egyptian women conceptualize notions of gender?[1] How do they operationalize these concepts in their everyday lives? What implications does this have for the socio-economic development of Egypt as a society? This is the problematic initially undertaken in this study. The reality, however, is that gender identity and gender roles are not the creation of individual women consciously choosing from an infinite variety of possibilities, but socially constructed and internalized subconsciously at a very early age through the process of gender socialization. The primary elements of gender identity and gender roles for women are themselves inextricably linked to the status of women in society. They are also directly related to the duties and/or rights of women both within the family as well as in society, and are closely linked to the nature of the socially proscribed relationship between men and women.

A person's identity is multi-dimensional. It is neither purely individual nor purely societal but a social construction which, while unique to each person, is a product of social interaction shaped by culture, a product of the processes of socialization and enculturation. As such, it reflects the values, beliefs, and attitudes inherent to a society's social norms. A person's identity is also dynamic, not static. It cannot easily be reduced to its individual elements, many of which change over time. Although some aspects of our identity are biologically innate while others are purely socially created, all aspects are socially defined, interpreted, and shaped. Some elements of identity are changed through choices and efforts of the individual, often referred to as achieved aspects of identity. Other elements change as we progress through the stages of the life-cycle, over which individuals have little, if any control. These tend to be biologically innate aspects of our identity. Age is a good example. Individuals may also have little control over changes in other elements of identity because of social factors which block individual agency. The degree to which individuals are encouraged to use human agency to shape and even change aspects of their identity vis-à-vis the degree to which they are blocked from doing so differs from culture to culture as well as historically within a culture.

Gender identity is only one aspect of a person's identity, and it is inextricably intertwined with and influenced by the many other aspects of an individual's identity. Indeed, subjectivity or consciousness of the Self has been shown to constitute many identities, overlapping and even contradictory. In Egypt, as in many other societies, social class, religion, age, education, marital status, parental status, and region are not only also important aspects of identity but are particularly salient influences on gender identity. Like gender, they are also socially constructed through the material practices of everyday life. Thus, it is virtually impossible to isolate and discuss gender identity *per se* without addressing these other aspects of identity.

Furthermore, notions of national identity, what constitutes Egyptian versus foreign identity, are tightly entangled with notions of gender identity. In fact, national identity often overshadows issues of gender. This question of what constitutes Egyptian identity is just as hotly contested in Egypt today as what constitutes appropriate behavior and social roles for women. Indeed, competing notions of gender comprise only one dimension of competing identities in Egyptian society. Therefore, in order to understand the specific notions of gender held by individual Egyptian women as well as their behavior in both the public (civic) and private (family) spheres, it is necessary to understand the broader identities and their paradigms as well as the competing and often contradictory social forces which shape them. This is in keeping with the critical realist perspective from which this study is undertaken.

B. Multiple Layers of Crisis in Egypt and Their Global Context: Implications for the Status, Rights, and Roles of Women and Egyptian Identity

Egyptian society is in a state of crisis. Few inside or outside Egypt would disagree; however, there is little agreement as to the precise nature of the crisis, the primary causes, or the best remedies. There are serious economic, political, educational, health, housing, gender, and other social crises shaking the very foundations of Egyptian society. The legitimacy of the system, including that of the government itself, has been increasingly questioned and challenged by many different groups and, in fact, most citizens. Egypt has become an armed camp divided against itself in numerous factions and the rule of law has broken down. It continues to be ruled by an authoritarian, if not totalitarian, military junta which does not tolerate the development of a civil society necessary for democracy.[2] Indeed, the real power behind all the Egyptian presidents continues to be the military and the *mukhabarāt* (*mabāhith amn ad-dawlah*), the secret intelligence police.[3] As ‘Amīra Al-’Azhary Sonbol (1988:34-36) has stated,

> What is needed to prevent this [violence] from happening is to have an honest and open debate about what kind of government and what kind of society the Egyptians really want, and then to allow their wishes to become reality. Halfway measures are leading the country to the brink of disaster. A half-étatist, half-capitalistic structure that also claims to fulfill the needs of a socialist equitable state simply cannot work in Egypt. A complete program of reform is required, no matter what or whom it costs...[but] trying to hide from reality until it is too late...seems to be a normal approach for the government...The government seems to be the only institution not aware of the fact that if Islamic revivalism is still alive and well and could ultimately cause a dramatic change in the very structure of the state and the society, it is because the system of government, the bureaucracy, and the constitution itself are simply not doing the job for which they were intended.

Egypt was one of the first great cradles of civilization, producing knowledge and monuments still not completely understood, capable of supporting enormous armies and a vast empire with a paid labor force of free persons, producing a great surplus of food, clothing, fine art, and other commodities which were traded far and wide, and ultimately inspired much of what the Greeks would pass on as the foundations of Western civilization (Bernal, 1987 and 1991). The relationship between the sexes was fairly egalitarian; women, having almost the same rights and freedoms as men, were integrated into public life, and some even ruled as Pharaoh (Robins, 1993; Tyldesley, 1994). Today, however, rather than being a beacon of knowledge, prosperity, and progress, Egypt is the second largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid,[3] engaged in a protracted and widespread ideological and military struggle against rebellion which verges on a civil war, most of its people are illiterate and malnourished,[4] and dogma has replaced the quest for knowledge.[5] The status of women has plummeted. Women's rights have been eroded. In fact, there is a virtual war against women, driving them from the public sphere and rendering them invisible with the comeback of the veil à la the uniform (*az-zīy al-'Islāmī*) of the militant Islamic fundamentalists, the *muḥaggabah* (Geadah, 1996; El-Guindi, 1981). Women are even marginalized within the family, and sex-segregation within households has made a comeback. The backlash against foreign domination, particularly U.S. neo-imperialism and Israeli Zionism, has increased the long-standing hostility amongst Egyptians based on inequality of class, religion, and region, polarizing Egyptian society and unleashing a vicious battle over Egyptian identity amongst many competing and contradictory images, with serious implications for the status, rights, and roles of women.[6]

Both ancient and modern Egyptian governments can be described as authoritarian, centralized, hierarchical, and bureaucratic, and the societies as authoritarian, if not totalitarian.[7] This was the case for all regimes, whether controlled by native Egyptians or foreigners. Thus, Egyptians have developed a long-standing distrust of the government.[8] Inequality of status, rights, and roles of women vis-à-vis men, however, has varied from regime to regime, and seems to have been related to the patriarchal nature[9] of particular regimes as well as a dogmatic, anti-intellectual outlook which discouraged education. While the quest for knowledge in ancient Egypt was nearly destroyed by the Macedonian Greeks during the Ptolemaic period, it has been seriously undermined by Egyptians themselves in the last few decades.[10] Likewise, although the status, rights, and roles of women in Egypt have declined under foreign domination since the Pharaonic era, there has also been a more recent reversal in the development of women's rights as citizens which has occurred under Egyptian control.

Ironically, after thousands of years of rule by foreigners, Egyptians themselves have regained control of their society only to become competing comprador elites of various foreign neo-imperialists.[11] Unlike their Western masters, however, most of the ruling Egyptian political elite do not tolerate debate and dissent; nor do they respect individual rights and freedoms, democratic ideals, or any other remnants of the Enlightenment. While these ideals of liberal democracy may have been introduced by Egyptians educated in the West and Westerners working in Egypt during the last two hundred years since the arrival of Europeans and the era of British colonial control, they remain foreign to Egyptian society and culture. Those Egyptians like Naguib Mahfouz, former Minister of Culture and 1988 winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, who cling to a Mediterranean-Hellenic (Western) identity and lament the dimming of the Enlightenment in Egypt are increasingly the target of angry Egyptians who reject this paradigm as not only foreign, but as a humiliating indication of the current neo-imperialist Western domination of Egypt.[12] Mahfouz was luckier than many others. Although many of his books are still banned in Egypt, he lives an active life, writing a column in the government-run Cairo daily newspaper, *al-Ahrām*, and visiting his favorite *shīshah* (coffee) shop, where, despite suffering multiple stab wounds, he survived a vicious attack by militant Islamic fundamentalists in October 1997. Many others have not been so lucky, including President Sadāt.

Competing identities are projected by groups with competing interests. Pan-Arab and/or pan-Islamic identities compete with each other as well as with the Mediterranean-Hellenistic, liberal democratic, more Western identities. With the influx of petrodollars from Arab Gulf countries fuelling petroculture, the debate amongst Islamists has been silenced by corruption and intimidation, leaving little room for legitimate moderate Islamic positions.[13] *Qur'ānic* pleas for Muslims to foster a thirst for knowledge as well as to respect social rights have been stifled in an atmosphere reminiscent of the Christian Inquisition in Medieval Europe. The climate is chilly and potentially fatal for those who support figurative rather than literal interpretation of the *Qur'ān* and reform or modernization of the *Sharī'ah*.

The case of Nasr Hāmid 'Abū-Zayd, Associate Professor of Arabic at Cairo University, provides an example of this reality facing thousands of others like him. He was denied tenure in March 1992 because he was declared *kāfir* (apostate or disbeliever) and a heretic: his book, *A Critique of Religious Discourse*, constitutes "...one of the most frank contemporary discussions about conflicts between the state religious *apparati*, the religious opposition, and secular supporters of free thought, ...convincingly... [arguing] that the difference between the 'moderates' of the official state religious institutions (*al-'Azhar, Dār al-'Ulūm*) and those 'extremists' of the political-religious opposition (the Muslim Brothers, Islamic Groups, *Jiḥād*) is less one of content than of style" (Bakr and Colla, 1993:27).[14] Ironically, it was the "moderates" who most opposed 'Abū-Zayd. They were his co-workers. They were not only content to deny him tenure and attempt to publicly humiliate and discredit his work and his character, but they supported a team of lawyers headed by *Shaykh* Yūsuf al-Badrī to petition the court to declare 'Abū-Zayd an apostate and hence, divorce him from his wife, since, in Islam, a Muslim woman cannot be married to an apostate. In 1993, the court declared 'Abū-Zayd divorced from his wife, 'Ibtihāl Yūnis, who was also a professor at Cairo University. This divorce was upheld by the appeal court in 1995, and the Cairo Court of Cassation in August 1996.[15]

Since many Muslims consider it a duty to kill an apostate, 'Abū-Zayd and his wife fled to Holland in August 1996, where they continue to lecture at universities. While 'Abū-Zayd and his wife are fortunate to be wealthy enough and famous enough to live a privileged life, *albeit* in exile, thousands of others are not so lucky. Many have lost their jobs, been reduced to abject poverty, publicly humiliated, and even killed because their views are not considered politically correct by either the government and/or militant Islamic fundamentalists (Bakr and Colla, 1993; Dwyer, 1991; confidential interviews).

The religious and political elites in Egypt, though clinging to a more secular, Western-oriented identity, have tried to incorporate a different Islamic identity as a counterfoil to the Islamic fundamentalists, which include both moderate and militant groups. As a response to the 'Abū-Zayd divorce case, the Egyptian Parliament (*Majlis ash-Sha'ab*) passed legislation in January 1996 restricting the right to file such law suits to persons with a direct interest in a case, but neither President Mubarak nor anyone else has been willing to criticize the labelling of 'Abū-Zayd as an apostate for fear of his own life.[16] The public slaughter of the famous secular writer Farāg Fūdah in 1992, after he was declared an apostate for his call for separation of state and religion, is vividly remembered by Egyptians (Foda, 1993). Ironically, Islam is used by both the government and many of its fiercest opponents to justify their policies and strategies, including the murder of Egyptians and foreigners. Unfortunately, Islam is also more often used by both the government and its opponents to deny human and civil rights (including women's rights) to Egyptians than to promote them, a far cry from the time of the prophet, Muhammad.[17] That is why the 'Abū-Zayd case is so important: at the very least, "[w]hat is at stake is the future of Egyptian intellectual life" (Bakr and Colla, 1993:27). It symbolizes the struggle ..."between secularists and [political] Islamists, between Egyptian critical thought and Western cultural imperialism, and most importantly, between the Egyptian regime's ideological institutions and the freedom of individuals to think critically" (*Ibid.*).

Academic freedom as well as individual rights and freedoms for all citizens are necessary elements of a liberal democracy, but Egypt has never been a liberal democracy, at least not for most of its citizens.[18] This raises the issue of the distinction between "citizen" and "subject" as well as the question of whether any of the competing paradigms of identity enable women and/or men to attain the status of citizen (Stowasser, 1996). While attaining liberal democracy is the goal of those holding a more secular, Mediterranean-Hellenistic and/or Western-oriented identity, the majority of its proponents, like their liberal predecessors in the West, are concerned with their own liberty and generally not eager to share it with those of lower status, particularly the peasantry. Furthermore, this liberal identity remains foreign to most Egyptians, who consider it Euro-centric and even Christian, associating it with British imperialism, which many Egyptians also associate with the humiliation of Egypt and Islam (Geadah, 1996). Furthermore, the devastating defeat of Egypt by Israel in 1967 not only brought disillusionment with the secular, Western development model and its liberal notions of identity, it also brought realization that the strength of Israel was based on the religious fundamentalism of Zionism (Geadah, 1996). Most Egyptians began to believe that they had paid a high price for ignoring, if not rejecting, their identity as Muslims. Thus, the majority of Egyptians became receptive to the Islamic identity promoted by proponents of political Islam, including its extremely conservative, patriarchal interpretation of an essentialist (genetic) conceptualization of gender (*Ibid.*).[19]

Rather than the secular, Western model of identity and modernity, most Egyptians have probably always preferred a form of local nationalism based on more familiar traditional elements of identity: religion, family, clan, village, and region. This remains the case today. Furthermore, Islam takes into account the importance of local customs (*'urf*) and tries to accommodate them. The problem with the pan-Arab and/or pan-Islamic identities currently being promoted in Egypt and throughout the Middle East, however, is that they insist on both a literal and a patriarchal interpretation of the *Qur'ān*. Furthermore, the Islamists who support political Islam reject the legitimacy of individual interpretation (*'ijtihād*) as well as figurative interpretation of the *Qur'ān* which had been the hallmark of spiritual Islam prior to the tenth century. Instead, religious scholars and leaders (*'ulāmah*) issue their interpretations, consensus, and rulings (*qiyās* and *'ijma'a*) which are not open to question by individual Muslims. Dissenters are likely to be labelled apostates and become targets for Muslims who believe that they will be rewarded in heaven for killing an apostate (Bakr and Colla, 1993; Sonbol, 1988). In direct contradiction with the spirit of Islam, supporters of political Islam are also virulently anti-Christian. This has become very clear to Coptic Christians as well as foreign tourists in Egypt who have increasingly become the targets of political Islam. Not only is this movement and the identity it promotes anti-intellectual, anti-Christian, anti-liberal and anti-Western, it is ultimately anti-democratic (Geadah, 1996).

The 'Abū-Zayd case is also illustrative of the lack of regard for women as persons with rights which permeates Egyptian society today. As Mayer (1997:34) reports:

> Neither the plaintiffs nor the courts accorded the slightest weight to ['Ibtihāl] Yunis's opinion about whether her marriage should continue...[Rather] the courts...terminated the marriage of an adult woman without regard for her views, thereby treating the woman like a mindless object...[This case] told [Egyptian women] that Egyptian courts were ready to take unprecedented measures to shore up patriarchy...Now the grounds for marital dissolution had been expanded to include strangers' disapproval of a Muslim husband's religious ideas, making any man's opinion that a certain husband was unfit to be in charge of his Muslim wife grounds for divorce. In the process, wives were treated like incompetent minors subject to a general patriarchal tutelage.

Another irony of these court decisions is that they were made by secular courts. This only further highlights the significance of the repeal of the 1979 Personal Status Laws and the urgency of the need for legislation to ensure women's rights, bringing domestic legislation in line with commitments made by the Egyptian government under international law. The flagrant abuse of women's rights and abrogation of international law evident in the 'Abū-Zayd case are an example of the severe patriarchal backlash in Egypt to the Cairo Population Conference and the Beijing Conference on Women's Rights (Mayer, 1997). Even Egypt's reservations to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women did not include abrogation of women's right to equality of contractual capacity, though it did qualify women's human rights, subordinating them to *Sharī'ah* and specifying that married women are to be treated as dependents of their husbands" (*Ibid.*:35). Thus, some Egyptian courts were "...distorting Islamic precepts regarding women's

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including women's rights as human rights, but, alas, they have not implemented them, primarily because they hold an essentialist notion of gender which compels them to see women's rights in society as secondary to their domestic responsibilities, in contrast to men's citizenship rights, which are primary (Mayer, 1995a/b and 1997; confidential interviews). This is true both for those who hold a secular, more liberal identity as well as those who claim a moderate, more modern Islamic identity.[22] It is even true for the tiny, marginalized minority of the elite who claim a socialist or even communist identity (confidential interviews).

The Egyptian state has, thus, become the arbitrator of women's rights, wresting traditional control from male heads of extended families. This rise of the neo-patriarchal state (Sharābī, 1988) is itself a major bone of contention for most Egyptians because it extends and intensifies state control over the lives of individual citizens, male and female alike. By legislating and enforcing uniform, codified Personal Status Laws nationally, the neo-patriarchal state undermined control of women's rights in Islam from interpretation of *Sharī'ah* by independent religious courts at the local level taking into consideration local customs. The neo-patriarchal state also regulates the education and appointment of judges, the functioning of al-'Azhar University, and the appointment of *'ashīyūkh* (*shaykh*) to its Council as well as the Grand Mufti himself. Thus, despite asserting its identity as a secular, modern state, the Egyptian government eliminated the separation and independence of religion and state, effectively establishing itself as the authoritative voice of Islam in a desperate attempt to stem the influence of alternative interpretations of Islam which were threatening to drown Egyptian society. Ironically, in order to maintain its control, the state was forced to compromise many of its positions, particularly its commitment to improving the status of women and protection of their rights, even their rights in Islam. In addition to academic debates, these developments have spawned great public debate and even violent confrontations since the mid-1970's, particularly over whether they have been beneficial for women.[23]

As Sharābī (1988) asserts, the rise of the neo-patriarchal state in Egypt signifies the marriage of Western imperialism with Arab patriarchy. As comprador elites, successive Egyptian governments have adopted the Western so-called secular modernization paradigm of development which has resulted in the continued dependency of Egypt on the West, and ultimately the underdevelopment of Egypt not only economically, but socially and politically.[24] The U.S.A. considers Egypt to be of prime strategic importance for U.S interests abroad, second only to Israel.[25] Despite strong U.S. political, military, and economic support for Egypt, the imposition of a structural adjustment program by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund is evidence enough of the failure of this approach.[26] Thus, many, if not most, Egyptians have come to question the wisdom of continuing to pursue this development paradigm. As is evident in Western societies, the modernization paradigm of development has also failed to protect the rights of women and is far from ensuring social equality of the sexes. This is also the case in Egypt. Furthermore, because the neo-patriarchal Egyptian state has retained the patriarchal aspects of Arab culture, it has been unwilling to challenge the essentialist notion of gender which underlies both secular and religious paradigms of identity and development (Karmi, 1993; Mayer, 1995b). In fact, it has not been possible to challenge patriarchy because of the discrediting of rationalist thought, whether as socialist and revolutionary by government supporters or as socialist and anti-religious and/or Western imperialist by supporters of political Islam (Bakr and Colla, 1993; Dwyer, 1991).

With global communications and rising expectations, Egyptians have become impatient not only with the controversy about the rights of women, but also with the lack of socio-economic development, especially the lack of opportunities for health care, education, employment, and general well-being for the majority of the population. Rather than everyday life of the average Egyptian improving over the last twenty-five years, it has deteriorated .[27] People no longer feel optimistic. Men as well as women feel they have fewer opportunities for advancement than they did in the past. For the first time since 1952, Egyptians no longer feel confident that their children will face a better future than they did. The crises most people face daily in their own lives just trying to survive in a society whose social institutions offer little support tax them severely -- mentally, emotionally, and physically. Not only the state, but increasingly also the extended family, is no longer able to meet even the subsistence needs of people.[28]

It is within this climate that this study investigates how Egyptian women from all social groups, classes, ages, and neighborhoods in Cairo construct and operationalize their notions of gender and, to a lesser extent, national identity. While it is important to understand the context of women living in Egyptian society and Egypt's global context from a historical perspective, its provision is beyond the scope of this dissertation. It remains important, however, to understand that the differences in the status, rights, and roles of Egyptian women in different historical epochs reflect different notions of gender identity as well as Egyptian identity which are still evident today in Egypt. Although most Egyptians have little knowledge about this aspect of their history, many of these elements are still part of the collective unconscious, often surfacing in partial and contradictory combinations (El-Sa'adāwī, 1989 and 1992). Given the current battle for hegemonic control of identity being fought not only in Egypt but throughout the Muslim world between the U.S.A. and Sa'udi Arabia, it is no wonder that Egyptians are currently confused yet obsessed with the quest for identity, particularly for its female citizens.

II. Statement of the Problem, Research Questions, and Organization of Thesis

A. Statement of the Problem

This study explores the dynamics of conceptualization and operationalization of gender by Egyptian women and, to a lesser extent, of their conceptualization of national identity as Egyptians. The social construction of gender and national identity is mediated by a multitude of contradictory international, national, regional, and subjective factors. Indeed, neither gender nor national identity are simple constructs, but rather are complex aspects of a person's multiple internal subjectivities and social interactions.

Conceptualizations of gender and national identity are not static nor immutable; they are incessantly shaped by a multitude of structure-agency mediations and by a complex process of negotiations within the web of social relationships of each person's everyday life. Women, being subordinated to men in Egyptian society, are caught in an extended family network of relationships of duty and obligation from which they have no real escape, no real alternative. There is no welfare state to support them; they are at the mercy of their menfolk. Thus, Egyptian women are caught up in a complex process of family and clan alliances, negotiations, and disputes which subjects them to cooperative, coercive, and hostile relationships at one time or another.

Nevertheless, there has been a steady movement by the Egyptian state since the 1952 Revolution to appropriate control over women, weakening the patriarchal control of the family, referred to as the neo-patriarchal state (Sharābī, 1988). This has resulted in a strong backlash against the state, and the resurgence of militant Islamic fundamentalist groups trying to overthrow the state and enforce *Sharī'ah* (Islamic law) nationally.[29] In an attempt to palliate these reactions to the state, the government has repealed the more liberal 1979 Personal Status Laws that raised the status of women and better protected their rights.

While the overall framework of this study is one of critical realism, the study utilizes a variety of research methodologies to ascertain and interpret the dynamics of gender and national identity among Egyptian women today. Thus, the study is also partially an ethnographic case study including the life-histories of fifty-one Egyptian women using participant observation as well as intensive and extensive interviews. At least two hundred other Egyptian acted as informants. Furthermore, documentary and other material, whether published or not, is also used to provide the social context necessary for interpreting the interview data. As such, the study is not testing any hypotheses, theories, or models, but rather seeking a better understanding of how these particular women, the respondents, understand gender and national identity, and how they function as female Egyptian citizens. This information is important to better understand the roles of women in Egyptian society today as well as the implications this has for the socio-economic development of the country.

There is lack of consensus amongst Egyptians within and between classes and regions about gender identity and gender roles for many reasons, due both to internal and external social, economic, religious, and political influences and contradictions which have changed over millennia.[30] At the moment, this confusion about gender identity and gender roles is probably at an all-time high. Even sophisticated Egyptians with a well-balanced sense of themselves have begun to question their understanding of "reality"(El-Sa'adāwī, 1989 and 1992).[31] This is central to the research, since one of the major questions underlying it is what explains these contradictions in identity and roles, particularly gender identity? Since there is also a crisis of national identity in Egypt, what, if any, is the relationship between this crisis in national identity and the gender identity crisis for women?

There are both objective and subjective dimensions to this, but the focus of the research is on what the women as subjects themselves understand, their understanding of meaning, their perspective, their knowledge. Thus, the knowledge we seek in this study is emic. This includes the contradictions within each person's own gender identity as well as contradictions between each person's stated views and perceptions, and actions. The variation of gender identities will, of course, be rooted within not only Egyptian society as a whole, but within particular sub-contexts of that very complex society. A society's views about gender are central to its view of socio-economic development. Egyptian views on both differ considerably from those in the West.

B. Research Questions

I began the research process with a series of research questions, though I anticipated that they would be modified, added to, and some possibly deleted as the research progressed. The following questions reflect the critical realist approach to this study and framed both the research and interviewing process (Cook and Campbell, 1979):

1. How do the respondents conceptualize gender, including their own gender identity?
    a. What are the ideological underpinnings of the respondents' conceptualization of gender?
    b. Are respondents' conceptualization of gender essentialist or constructivist?
    c. Are respondents self-reflective about gender identity in their normal everyday life?

2. What variations in conceptualization of gender and in gender identity occur amongst respondents and why?
    a. What differences do respondents notice between their mothers' and their own concepts of gender identity and gender roles?
    b. What understanding do the respondents have of the contradictory concepts of gender identity in Egyptian society and how do they deal with this reality?

3. What factors seem to affect respondents' conceptualization of gender?

4. What influence does the state have on respondents' conceptualization of gender, their gender identity, and gender roles?

5. How do respondents' behavior compare with their stated conceptualization of gender?

C. Organization of the Thesis

Chapter Two compares Western social science conceptualizations of identity with those of Egyptians and reviews the relevant research on Cairene women. Chapter Three addresses research methodology. Chapters Four, Five, Six, and Seven present the empirical data collected during the field research in Egypt during 1993-94, and Chapter Eight is the conclusion.

Chapter One End Notes

1

It is important to point out here that although the Egyptian women interviewed for this study, the respondents as well as the informants, lived in Cairo at the time of the interviews, none of them used the word "Cairene" to describe herself and none of them referred to other Egyptian women as "Cairene". As discussed later, some respondents identified themselves using religious, ethnic, and regional identities, and some women originally from outside Cairo referred to native "Cairene" women as "Egyptians" to distinguish them from their own identity. Thus, while it may appear "natural" to refer to the respondents as Cairene women, since they live in Cairo, this would be an imposition unacceptable to the respondents themselves. Hence, I avoid the use of the term "Cairene" in favor of the terms provided by the respondents themselves.

2

'Ibrahīm (1993), Kandiyoti (1997) and Kāram (1997) refer to the general crisis in Egyptian society and the authoritarian nature of the state. Regarding the lack of democracy and/or weakness of civil society, see 'Ibrahīm (1995a), Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights (1994), Schwedler (1995), and Sonbol (1988). For references on the authoritarian/totalitarian nature of the Egyptian government, see End Note 7 below.

3

These aspects of Egyptian society have also been noted by others. See Bakr and Colla (1993), Dwyer (1991), "Egypt: Yellow Press" (1998), Fandy (1993), Hudson (1977, 1980, 1991), Hudson, *et al.* (1996), 'Ibrahīm (1994), and Moghadam (1991).

4

Weinbaum (1986) provides a thorough discussion of Egyptian-U.S. relations, including foreign aid. Bangurd, Jr. (1994), al-Disūqī (1993?), Mitchell (1991), Morsy (1986), and Sullivan (1987 and 1990) also provide substantial criticism of U.S. A.I.D. in Egypt. See also Azzam (1996).

5

Mitchell (1991) provides data supporting this; and, in fact, links the malnutrition and poverty amongst the vast majority of Egyptians ($\gtrsim$90%) directly to the type and level of U.S. foreign aid to Egypt. See also El-Baz (1997), Dessouki (1982), ad-Dīn (1982), "Give Us This Day..." (1984), Khouri-Dagher (1996), Korayem (1982 and 1987), UNICEF (1993), Wachs, *et al.* (1996), World Bank (1991 and 1993), and Zaitoun (1988 and 1991). See also Egypt's Health Net. Gallagher (1990) provides a historical discussion poor health in Egypt.

6

See Bakr and Colla (1993), Huband (1998), and Tībī (1995).

7

The various points made in this section are based on my own first-hand observation of Egyptian society and comments made by respondents and informants for this study, but they have also been cited by other researchers, Egyptians as well as Westerners. See Agence France-Presse (Dec. 5 and 15, 1997), 'Ajāmī (1981a), al-'Alī (1997), Bakr and Colla (1993), Hirst (1991a/b/c), Kandiyoti (1997), Kāram (1997), Mayer (1997), Moghadam (1991), al-Nowaihi (1979), Rugh (1993), Sāfī (1994), Safwān (1981, cited in Sharābī, 1990:32), and Shukrallah (1994).

8

See Agence France-Presse (Oct. 12, 1997), Akavi (1982), 'Ayūbī (1980, 1982, 1988, 1989), Berger (1957), Hinnebusch (1988a), Jabbra (1989), Palmer, *et al.* (1988) for a discussion about the bureaucratic nature of the Egyptian state. See Hill (1979) for a discussion about the bureaucratic nature of the Egyptian state, particularly the judiciary. See Akavi (1975) for a discussion about the patrimonial nature of Egyptian society and the state. See 'Abdallah (1993), Lesch (1988 and 1989), Kandiyoti (1997), Mernīssī (1993b), Middle East

Watch (1991), Moore (1974), Mullaney (1992), Owen (1983), Picard (1988), Rubin (1990), Sonbol (1988), and Tripp (1996) for a discussion about the authoritarian nature of Egyptian society and the state.

9

Besides information obtained from respondents and informants, and my own first-hand observations of Egyptian society, others have published remarks about the distrust Egyptians hold of their government and its authoritarian nature. See ʻAbdallah (1993), al-ʻAlī (1997:177-178&188), Ansari (1984), ʻAyūbī (1991), Huband (1998), Kāram (1997), El-Mernīssī (1977), Mullaney (1992), Owen (1983), Rubin (1990), al-Sayyid (1993:241), Singerman (1994:177-179;188), Sonbol (1988), Waterbury (1983), and Whitter (1994).

10

The English word "patriarchy" is derived from the ancient Greek words *patriarchē-patria*, "a family, from *patēr*, father, and *archē*, rule" (*The New Webster Encyclopedic Dictionary of the English Language*, 1971:608). It means literally, the father is ruler of the family. In Latin, it is *patriarcha*. Patriarchy is an ideology of authority relations which developed between 3100-600 B.C. in the Middle East and Mediterranean regions (Lerner, 1986:8). Although patriarchy developed independently in many other parts of the world, this discussion is restricted to Semitic cultures of the Middle East. Prior to patriarchy, during the Neolithic and Bronze ages, women were held in high esteem and their ability to reproduce was considered magic (*Ibid.*:31). Patriarchy was the result of a long period of transition from relatively egalitarian relations amongst individuals living in relatively small communities to the development of more complex, hierarchical, bureaucratic mass societies, the rise of the archaic state (*Ibid.*:212). Substantial changes occurred in kinship organization, technology, economic relations, religion, and government. Knowledge of paternity led to the subordination of women and children as private property of men; male gods gained ascendency in religion; militarization resulted in imperialist aggression and enslavement of conquered enemies, leading to the rise of mass "civilizations".

There are basic characteristics of patriarchy which all patriarchal societies have in common, though many of the ways in which patriarchy is manifested culturally varies historically within a society as well as amongst societies. Here, only a brief listing of the characteristics of a patriarchal society are given. Nevertheless, one characteristic common to all patriarchal societies historically and cross-culturally is male control of women's sexuality and procreativity (Lerner, 1986:8). Lerner (*Ibid.*) Asserts that this appropriation of women's sexuality and capacity for reproduction provided the foundation for private property and social classes. Furthermore, female sexuality was associated with sin and evil, and heterosexual relations were purely for procreation (*Ibid.*:10). The exercise of domination and exploitation of subordinated groups, including slavery, by the elites and of women by men also form core traits of patriarchal societies (*Ibid.*:9). Another central trait of patriarchal societies is the "...artificially created division of women into respectable and not-respectable women", between those who were private property of individual men and those who were the common property of all men (*Ibid.*). The association of women with emotion, "irrationality", and nature in contrast to association of men with intellect, reason, and society also became strongly entrenched in ancient Greece and formed part of the rationale for maintaining tight control over women. Reason was separated from emotion and considered a "godly" trait. Women were feared because their deep emotions could overpower men's reason, leading them to sin and defeat. Thus, the physical, personality, and behavior traits associated with women are devalued and even despised by men, while those of men are elevated as superior (Lerner, 1986).

These ancient patriarchal beliefs have penetrated all Middle Eastern societies, indeed, all patriarchal societies globally, including the West. Having common core patriarchal beliefs rooted in ancient Semitic societies, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam continue to provide bases of legitimation for the perpetuation of patriarchy by patriarchal religious leaders not only in the Middle East, but globally. Thus, even though the particular manifestations of domination and exploitation of women and other minority groups differ from society to society as well as over time, the broad framework of patriarchy remains the same.

11

The "smothering of the flame of knowledge, of the Enlightenment" was a topic of discussion amongst some intellectuals in Egypt while I was conducting the field work for this study. Naguib Mahfouz also lamented this state of affairs in his column in the English language version of the weekly paper, *al-Ahrām*. In addition, Mark Huband (1998) wrote a scathing article about this in the *Financial Times* recently. The following three excepts from this article indicate the extent of his criticism: "Egyptian culture used to be enriched by interaction. Today, this is no longer true." "Egypt is grappling with an increasingly confused relationship with its heritage." "Educational philosophy [in Egypt] is on the wrong track and will produce a generation of intellectual cripples." See also al-'Alī (1997) and Sagiv (1995).

12

See Hinnebusch, (1993), Hourani (1991:419), Mitchell (1991), Sullivan (1990), Vitalis (1990 and 1995), and others for varying accounts of the complex relationships and rivalries amongst the Egyptian and Turco-Egyptian elites themselves as well as between them and various foreigners and their governments. For a discussion of Sadāt's "Open Door" policy leading to increased dependency on the U.S.A. and resulting in widespread impoverishment of most Egyptians -- which has even forced millions of Egyptians to work in the West (the well-educated) as well as Arab Gulf countries -- increased underdevelopment, see 'Ajāmī (1981b and 1982), 'Amīn (1982, 1985 and 1995), Anoudé (1994), El-Baz (1997), Choukri (1986), Dessouki (1982 and 1984), Fandy (1993), Hammam (1979 and 1986), Harik and Sullivan (1992), Khafāgy (1984), Kibbī (1993), Lindisfarne (1997), Middle East Institute (1985), Mohi-Eldīn (1975), Moore (1986), Quandt (1990), Richards (1984), Sonbol (1988), Sullivan (1987 and 1990), Taylor-Awny (1985), Waterbury (1976, 1983 and 1985), Waterbury and Richards (1990), Za'alouk (1989).

13

Naguib Mahfouz was speaking out about this on the radio and in his columns in the weekly English-language version of *al-Ahrām* newspaper during 1993-1994 while I was conducting the interviews for the dissertation in Cairo. See also Bakr and Colla (1993), Dwyer (1991), and Sonbol (1988). See also End Note 11.

14

See Bakr and Colla (1993) Dwyer (1991), Lindisfarne (1997), El-Sa'adāwī (1992), and Sonbol (1988). Regarding corruption, see Azzam (1996), 'Ismā'īl (1995), and Waterbury (1976).

15

The Muslim Brotherhood (*al-'Ikhwān al-Muslimūn*), Holy War (*Jihād*), and Islamic Groups (*Gamā'āt 'Islāmīyah*) are Islamic fundamentalist groups in Egypt which want to establish theocratic state governance based on literal and patriarchal interpretation of the Muslim holy book, the *Qur'ān*. The latter two groups have been responsible for a number of terrorist attacks on government officials, the police and military as well as foreign tourists as part of their campaign to overthrow the government. These more militant groups have also attacked Egyptian Christians as well as Egyptian Muslims who oppose them; and they have attacked women without guardians and/or dressed "indecently". See 'Abdel-Malek (1979), Accad (1990), 'Ansārī (1984b), 'Ayūbī (1980, 1982/83 and 1991), Azzam (1996), Berger (1992), Choueiri (1990), Davis (1984), Eccel (1984), Farah (1986), Gallagher (1989), Garbus (1980), Greenaway (1995), Guenena (1986), El-Guindi (1981a/b, 1982, 1986), Haddad (1986 and 1987), Hirst (1992a/b/c), Hussein (1985), I. 'Ibrāhīm (1987), S. 'Ibrāhīm (1980 and 1981), 'Ismā'īl (1994), Jansen (1986), Kepel (1986), Lamb (1998), Landau (1990), Mernīssī (1988b), Rubin (1990), Rugh (1993), Schneider (1998), Shrukallah (1994), Whitter (1994), and Wright (1985). For a discussion about the effects of Islamic fundamentalism on women, see Badran (1985 and 1991), Berger (1992), El-Gawhary (1994), Geadah (1990 and 1996), Gerami (1996), El-Guindi (1981b, 1982, 1983), Haddad (1987), Hélie-Lucas (1993), Hoodfar (1991), Kāram (1997), MacLeod (1991 and 1996), Rugh (1986 and 1993), Shrukallah (1994), el-Sohl and Mabro (1994), Sonbol (1988), Williams (1979 and 1980), and Zuhur (1992).

16

In the absence of any personal status or other legislative code provision for this situation, that of strangers petitioning to divorce a Muslim married to an apostate, the courts ruled that *hisbah* (enjoining good and forbidding evil) could be invoked under *Hanafī* jurisprudence. They ruled that 'Abū-Zayd's writings contained heretical ideas which characterized him as an apostate, and thus, his marriage to a Muslim woman constituted fornication under Islamic law. (Mayer, 1997:34).

17

Besides Bakr and Colla (1993), see Sonbol (1988:34).

18

See Dwyer (1991), Hélie-Lucas (1993), al-Hibrī (1997), Kāram (1997), and el-Kharboutly and Hussein (1976).

See L.'Ahmed (1982 and 1986), Communication Group... (1992), Gerner-Adams (1979), W. Haddad (n.d.), al-Hibrī (1982a/b, 1992, 1997), Kusha (1990), Mernīssī (1993a) El-Sa'adāwī (1982), and Walther (1993) for a discussion of women's rights and roles throughout the history of Islam as well as today. Of particular importance here is the debate as to whether there was a significant improvement in the status and rights of women in Islam vis-à-vis pre-Islamic Arabia. Whether or not Egyptian women gained status and rights with Islam is itself an entirely different question, of course. (See below for a more detailed discussion.) See Abū-Khalīl (1993) for a critique of this debate.

19

See 'Abdallah (1988a), 'Ansārī (1986), Baker (1978), Canto (1991), Feiler (1988), Gauch (1990), Garbus (1980), Howard-Merriam (1990), Hudson (1986 and 1991), Hussein (1973), Kandil (1995), Lesch (1988 and 1989), Makram-Ebeid (1989 and 1993), McDermott (1988), Mernīssī (1993b and 1996b), Middle East Watch (1991), Moore (1974), Picard (1988), El-Sa'adāwī (1988), and Zākī (1995), and Zubaida (1992).

20

Regarding "political" Islam as distinct from "spiritual" Islam, see 'Ayūbī (1991), Dwyer (1991), Kāram (1997), and Kramer (1980).

21

See also Karmi (1993).

22

See 'Abū-Odeh (1996), Agence France-Presse (Mar. 11, 1997; Nov. 3, 1997; Nov. 10, 1997a; Jan. 5, 8, and 12a/b, 1998; Feb. 2, 1998), Bhatia (1994), CBC Radio (1996), Davis (1985), Deardon (1976), "Egypt to Maintain..." (1997), and "Reactions to..." (1994), and United Press International (Feb. 7, 1997).

23

It is not my intention to imply that women's rights as human rights and women's equality with men as citizens have been secured in Western states, either; they have not. The main difference between Western states and Arab states, Egypt in particular, is that this human rights discourse is considered integral to Western culture and civilization, whereas in Egypt and the other Arab countries it is considered foreign, imposed by former colonial powers by supra-national conventions and bodies such as the U.N. See Antonius (1997) and Mayer (1997). Only a minority of Islamic jurists and leaders argue for reform of the *Sharī'ah* to take account of the realities of modern life; and yet they root women's status and rights in Islam. Muslim reformers who dare to go beyond Islam in calling for recognition and implementation of women's rights as human rights along more liberal lines do so in the Western press, but not in the Middle East and not in the Arabic language, for fear of their very lives (an-Na'im, 1987, 1990a/b/c and 1994a/b). See also Bakr and Colla (1993).

24

See Dwyer (1991) Geadah (1996), Sharābī (1988), and Sonbol (1996).

25

See ’Abūrīsh (1998), Agence France-Presse (Nov. 6, 1997b), Vitalis (1990), and Waterbury and Richards (1990). For discussion about a famous public debate, see Gallagher (1989).

26

See Bangurd, Jr., (1994), al-Disūqī (1993?), Mitchell (1991), Morsy, (1986), Sullivan (1987 and 1990), Weinbaum, (1986). See also End Note 11.

27

See W. Antonius (1993), Mitchell (1991), Morsy (1986), and Sullivan (1987 and 1990).

28

See Agence France-Presse (Nov. 10, 1997), Korayem (1982 and 1987), Mitchell (1991), Morsy (1986), el-Sokkari (1984), Sullivan (1990), Wachs, *et al.* (1996), World Bank (1991 and 1993), and Zaitoun (1988 and 1991).

29

See Ramzī (1988), Rugh (1993), and Sonbol (1988), and Sullivan (1994).

30

See ‘Abdallah (1993), Ansari (1984), ‘Ayūbī (1991), I. ’Ibrahīm (1987), S. ’Ibrahīm (1985), Mullaney (1992), Owen (1983), Rubin (1990, Whitter (1994). In fact, many lower-middle class and increasingly middle class young people are joining Islamic fundamentalist groups as an alternative to dependency on kin and in an effort to seek a more "authentic" Muslim identity. Members of these groups often address each other as "sister" and "brother". There has been a shift of allegiance from kin to the "Muslim community". Ironically, there has also been somewhat of a generation reversal, with young people counselling their elders to adopt attire and behavior which they believe are more authentically Islamic. See Rugh (1993).

31

It is only recently that feminist scholars have begun to explore the differing rights and status of Egyptian women in different historical epochs. Furthermore, much of the historical data was recorded by male officials whose primary interest is not the promotion of women's welfare (Sonbol, 1996). Thanks to relatively recent feminist scholarship, the voices of Egyptian women have been recovered and the "conspiracy of silence" shattered (Nelson, 1986:16).

32

For the Egyptian identity crisis, see also Lindisfarne (1997), Sāfī (1994) and Sonbol (1988). ‘Ajāmī (1981a) and Cunningham (1971) discuss the "Arab" identity crisis and alienation generally. Gellner (1987) addresses the dynamics of culture, politics, and identity. See ’Ibrahīm (1979). See Agence France-Presse (Feb. 2, 1998), Azzam (1996), Greenaway (1997) and Sonbol (1988) regarding the "evil" influences of the West on Egyptians. Many recognize the influence of U.S. cultural hegemony in Egypt; however, they also believe that Egyptians maintain a core sense of what it is to be Egyptian. Most in this study believed that "authentic" Egyptian identity is based primarily upon language and religion (Islam) but that nationality (including an ethnic identification) was also extremely important and constituted deep attachment to the land -- the Nile, the fertile fields -- as well as the village, and diet. These elements have also been identified by others as central to Egyptian identity (*’ibn al-balad* and *bint al-balad*). See Culhane (1995), Haddad (1980), El-Hamamsy (1985), and El-Messīrī (1978). Agence France-Presse (Dec. 5 and 15, 1997) illustrates some aspects of the controversy over "authentic" Egyptian identity. On Nubian identity, see Geiser (1986). See Kandiyoti (1991a) on women.

Chapter Two
Identity: An Overview

Identities are our ways of making sense of the world. Satya P. Mohanty (1993:55)

As subjects, people have the right to define their own reality, establish their own identities, name their history...as objects, one's reality is defined by others, one's identity created by others, one's history named only in ways that define one's relationship to those who are subject. Bell Hooks (1989:42)

I. Conceptualization of Identity in Western Social Science: Addressing the Problematic

Despite the development of psychology and social psychology as academic disciplines seeking to explain the development of consciousness, Self, and the behavior of individuals as well as the more recent explosion of post-modern identity politics, there is still no adequate theory of subjectivity in the social sciences.[1] In fact, there is no consensus on the distinctions amongst various terms employed, such as consciousness, subjectivity, Self, psyche, identity, etc., since their definitions vary from discipline to discipline and theory to theory. It is beyond the scope of this study to provide such definitions, but a review of the literature highlighting the different perspectives on identity relevant to this study is in order.

Theorizing about subjectivity, consciousness, and hence, identity is predicated upon assumptions about the nature of knowledge, human nature, and human agency. Therefore, differences within each of these categories are used to group the theories. The first distinction is made between realists who believe that material objects, abstract propositions, and universals in time and space exist and are real independently of humans versus nominalists who believe that only particular things exist and are real (Chambliss, 1996; Lacey, 1976:180). Realists, like nominalists, believe in the existence of actual physical particular things, but unlike nominalists, realists believe that abstract or general universals are equal or superior to particulars (Lacey, 1976:180). Another distinction in theorizing about the nature of knowledge is whether words and language (nominalism), ideas (idealism), logical constructions (phenomenology), or the existence of material objects, propositions, and universals (realism) are emphasized (*Ibid.*). Related to these differences is the distinction between rationalists who believe that knowledge is gained through reason and empiricists who believe that knowledge is gained through observable facts.

Human agency has been conceptualized by different theorists in a continuum from complete lack of agency to autonomous free will. Thus, structural determinists conceive of persons as mere puppets responding to social structures, while cultural determinists conceptualize individuals as mere categorical signifiers, and biological determinists conceive of human agency as determined by biology. These groups of theorists minimize, if not deny, human agency. In contrast, idealists posit human agency as autonomous free will, unfettered by social and natural phenomena. Interactionist theorists conceptualize human agency as both aided and limited by all of these factors: biology, culture, and social structures.

Theories about subjectivity and/or identity are also closely linked to theories about human nature and subsume theories about human agency. One of the primary distinctions amongst these theories is between essentialists who believe that all aspects of the Self and identity are biologically-rooted and, hence, unchangeable versus constructionists who believe that they are socially constructed and, hence, changeable (See Spelman, 1988). Belief in the essentialist nature of human nature is a very ancient one, inherent in the very structure of patriarchy. Belief in the biological basis of male dominance and superiority over females, expressed as gender, is also essentialist and central to patriarchy. Nevertheless, one can argue for an essentialist notion of human nature without linking it to sex. In fact, this was central to Plato's *Republic* (Lee, 1987). Much more recently, Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762) and Mary Wollstonecraft (1791) disagreed about the nature of men and women. Rousseau argued that men and women have different natures, an essentialist notion of gender, and hence, they should have very different social roles suited to their different natures. Therefore, men and women should remain in their separate sphere (public/private). This is the "man the breadwinner" and "woman the nurturer" naturalistic argument still prevalent in the West as well as in Egypt. Wollstonecraft, however, believed that while men and women have different social roles and spheres, women would be better wives and mothers if they were educated for motherhood. Unlike Rousseau, Wollstonecraft considered men and women to be intellectually equal, and that virtue is dependent upon reasoned thought and control over the emotions. She promoted the education of girls and women to strengthen both their minds and their bodies, in contrast to Rousseau who believed that women were naturally good wives and mothers. Although Wollstonecraft was a modified essentialist, believing that differential functions and roles of men of women were fixed by sex, she was revolutionary in asserting that women should have full participatory citizenship rights.

Essentialist versus constructivist theories of human nature are closely intertwined with determinist versus agentive notions of action. Structural, cultural, and biological determinists minimize, if not deny, human agency in the development of subjectivity and identity, though they disagree as to the determining factor. For instance, Daly (1978), Echols (1989), and Rich (1976) are representative of feminist theorists who posit a primarily biological determinist view of subjectivity and identity. In contrast, Kristeva (1980) and Haraway (1991), building on Lacan (1966), Derrida (1978) and Foucault (1984), posit a social constructionist-cultural determinist view of subjectivity and identity. As post-structuralist, post-humanist, post-essentialist theorists, the latter also deny any authentic core, intentionality, natural abilities, or essential identity and view all categorizations of identity as nominalist. Not all constructivists, however, are nominalist. Liberal and socialist feminists fall on a continuum of "equality feminists" who believe that men and women can, and should, be socially equal even though they may be significantly different biologically.[2]

In contrast to essentialist and nominalist conceptualizations of human nature, idealists and realists recognize human agency as central to the construction of identity. According to the critical realist perspective, the subjectivity of an individual is not static, but the result of an on-going, life-long complex process resulting from the dialectical interaction and mediation between "objective reality" and "subjective reality", that is, between the objective circumstances of our material existence and our subjective understanding or ignorance of them. Subjectivity is developed through a dialectical process of an individual's self-conscious activities in everyday life which encompass one's experiences and her/his own self-awareness and self-reflection on experience. Thus, subjectivity is constructed and reconstructed through engagement in all aspects of social reality, self-reflection and reassessment of experience and social reality (de Lauretis, 1984 and 1990). Therefore, a realist theory of identity is necessarily a non-essentialist grounding of identity in the everyday physical and cultural realities of material life and is intersubjective (Moya, 1997).

More recently, some theorists have asserted that both biology and society are important contributors to the development of Self and identity. While the role of biology in the development of subjectivity is not well known, it is a factor in determining differences of perception, interpretation, assimilation, and rejection of social stimuli as well as in predisposing individuals to develop certain abilities as well as subjectivity. There has been a dampening on work in this area due to the "political correctness" asserted by the majority of social scientists on both the left and the right that biology has no role in social science (Ehrenreich and McIntosh, 1997). In all patriarchal societies, not only is there a difference between the female-embodied social subject and the male-embodied social subject, but the former are subordinated in every way to the latter (de Lauretis, 1990). Thus, in Lockean terms, the essence of being a woman is nominal essence, not real essence (*Ibid.*:257). In fact, membership in some social categories is not voluntary. One's social identities in terms of age, sex, and race-ethnicity are obligatory and somewhat essentialist (Skevington and Baker, 1989). Because individuals live in specific social context(s), subjectivity and identities will not be the same for every person in a specific society at a particular time. Nevertheless, certain concepts, mental schema, social norms, and notions of typical situations and interactions constituting a taken-for-granted "natural" attitude or understanding of everyday life provide a general common framework for people in any particular culture at any particular time. These are learned early in life and maintained through a life-long process of socialization.

The stability of the social system is dependent upon individuals being successfully socialized into accepting it as "normal". (Krueger, 1981:54-55) Thus, "...[T]he validity of social norms is grounded only in the intersubjectivity of the mutual understandings of intentions" (Habermas, 1970:92). There are biologically-based universals such as mental schema and physical responses amongst humans which exist regardless of culture and which must be taken into account when analyzing any society, because, "...[i]f there is no human nature outside social construction, no needs or capacities other than those constructed by a particular discourse, then there is no basis for social criticism and no reason for protest or rebellion" (Barbara Epstein, cited by Ehrenreich and McIntosh, 1997:15).

Indeed, there is a tension between the agency and complexity of the development of individual subjectivity and the development of a local particularistic collective subjectivity. Some individuals, for instance, are unwilling to accept all of these taken-for-granted understandings of society. The very concept of alienation presupposes that there are authentic human needs which are not being met by the culture (Ehrenreich and McIntosh, 1997). Individuals may have to engage in activities independently of what they may need, want, or think (Krueger, 1981:57). Norms, in short, do not have to be believed to be followed. While norms still set the rules for obtaining social recognition and acceptance as well as the validity of social identities, just as they stigmatize alternatives, norms are not only created but changed by actors. Individuals can resist the intended messages and/or dominant norms by developing alternatives of their own, what Ellsworth (1993) refers to as "oppositional readings".

Likewise, even though one may not be consciously aware of one's social identities, they may well be apparent to others. "The social reality of everyday life is thus also constituted within an objective context, which cannot be attributed and reduced to subjectively meaningful actions" (Krueger, 1981:57). In fact, while some aspects of objective reality act as facilitators for the institutionalization of certain subjective understandings, others act as barriers (*Ibid.*). Thus, "[o]bjectively existing role prescriptions and expectations...are not identical with the concrete behaviors and actions of individuals" even though behavior is always set in an objective context (*Ibid.*:58). Finally, both the subjective reality of individuals and the objective reality in which they live are affected by the other. Each are also fluid and ever-changing. Gramsci (1971) stressed the importance of understanding how material economic conditions influence consciousness and how, in turn, consciousness affects material economic conditions. One's understanding of the world is always mediated by one's cultural identity which is ultimately linked to one's material existence (Moya, 1997). As Teresa de Lauretis (1986:8) reminds us, subjectivity or identity "...is interpreted or reconstructed by each of us within the horizon of meanings and knowledges available in the culture at given historical moments, a horizon that also includes modes of political commitment and struggle...Consciousness, therefore, is never fixed, never attained once and for all, because discursive boundaries change with historical conditions."

Femininity has meaning only in relation to masculinity, just as womanhood has meaning only in relation to manhood. Although the specific traits identified as feminine or masculine vary somewhat historically and cross-culturally, the concepts are fundamental in shaping gender identity, necessary to the maintenance and reproduction of patriarchal relations and structures. Thus, gender identity is salient in any patriarchal society, including Egypt. Because men constitute the norm in patriarchal societies, women are always the "other", the object rather than the subject, the negative norm, the subordinated, the devalued, the undesirable, the invisible, the nonidentity. Women's gender identity, femininity, then, is relational to its superior opposite, masculinity.

To attain a subject position of Self, de Beauvoir (1952/1989) believed that women had to move away from this patriarchal "other" (of Man's Self) through constant struggle, which also included struggle against other subjects and even one's own body. Furthermore, de Beauvoir posited that this struggle for identity, for the Self or the Subject, by women necessitated their domination of the "other". Her concept of the Self is that of the free, independent, and autonomous individual, of sovereign Selfhood. As Weir (1993:12) points out, this concept of the Self is decidedly modern, not transhistorical and cross-cultural, as de Beauvoir assumed. As an existentialist phenomenologist, de Beauvoir accepted much of Enlightenment thought, particularly that of Lévi-Strauss and Hegel, though her focus on consciousness is much narrower. (*Ibid*:13;21). This idea that individuation can be attained only through struggle against and opposition to others is a biological fact for de Beauvoir, and results in inherently hostile relations amongst individuals. This applies only to men, however, because women have been frozen in a category of the eternal other in which they do not identify as "I" nor as "We", but as "thing". This situation continues because women live with and are subordinated to men. Men act and hence are subjects, but women are determinate beings as objects (*Ibid*:19).

Many feminist theorists continue to perceive this notion of women's self-identity as repression, whether nonidentity, difference, or intersubjective connection, with the "other". This includes relational theorists (de Beauvoir, 1952/1989; Chodorow, 1978; Gilligan, 1982; Benjamin, 1988, 1995, and 1998) as well as post-structuralists (Irigaray, 1991; Butler, 1990). These theorists accept the notion of inherent subject-object opposition. Furthermore, some feminists support de Beauvoir's view that this opposition to and even domination of the "other" is a positive force in the development of Selfhood, but most relational and post-modernist feminists today reject the idea of a separate individual Self as a fiction of patriarchal, modernist thought. This modernist, masculine, individual Self idealized in modernity is conceived of as self-made, independent, self-sufficient, and unconnected to others. Post-structuralist feminists reject self-identity as an ideal, preferring nonidentity or connection. All forms of identity are considered repressive: masculine self-identity represses femininity, and universal feminine self-identity represses differences amongst groups and even individual women (Weir, 1993). In fact, post-structural feminists reject the concepts of woman and womanhood. Rather than address self-identity, post-structural feminists discuss subjectivity more befitting their more nominalist conceptualization as always in the process of construction, fluid, fragmented, non-unitary (Ferguson, 1993; Flax, 1993; Henriques, *et al*., 1984; S. Smith, 1993). Thus, "rather than reformulating identity...[and] developing alternative theories of individual identity..." relational and post-structuralist theorists tend to "...simply reject identity and autonomy..." (Weir, 1993:27).

As Weir (1993) points out, however, a distinction must be made between domination and mediation. Domination leads to repressive forms of identity, whereas mediation can lead to non-repressive forms of identity. Drawing on Kristeva's (1973/86, 1980, and 1988/91) conception of self-identity as emerging from a dialectical process between the praxis of subjects and the socio-symbolic structures of their society, Weir (1993) developed a theory of non-dominating identity which acknowledges both relatedness and separation, expression rather than repression of nonidentity and difference. This approach is more in line with Hegel's dialectical transcendence of subject and object and could be followed to develop non-repressive identities. This approach would also be more acceptable to Egyptian women than most other Western social science, including feminist, theories of the Self. It would enable Egyptian women to develop non-repressive identities which are distinctive to them as women and as Egyptians.

Whether one conceptualizes subjectivity as unitary or non-unitary, de Lauretis (1987) believes that women often unconsciously reproduce patriarchy through their everyday activities, their self-expression, and their self-representation because of the hegemony of the "seamlessly unified Self" of dominant masculinist, humanist ideologies. They are often afraid of expressing ideas and emotions which violate traditional norms and struggle to show a coherent, unified Self. This serves to trap women in these structures of domination and exploitation rather than encourage them to explore alternatives necessary to liberate them. DuPlessis (1985) believes that women can express the internal and external conflicts they experience in everyday life, and that they can make their marginalization in patriarchal society the focus of their narratives. In fact, Sartre (1963) believed that individuals can resist and violate subjectively felt and objectively imposed norms and limitations by making sense of their own lives, what he called positive praxis through the progressive-regressive method.

Sidonie Smith (1993) warns of the dangers of denying Self by reifying infinitely fragmented subjectivity because, in fact, the Self is produced daily and can be expressed through acting, speaking, and writing. A woman can make sense of her fragmented, conflicted subjectivity by strategically fixing and unfixing her subject positions by responding strategically to the specificities of each situation, in situated responsiveness (Ellsworth and Miller, 1996; Holloway, 1989). Therefore, experiencing non-unitary subjectivity can validate conflict and enable women to express their own feelings and experiences as counter-hegemonic practices that can serve to emancipate themselves and their societies from hegemonic ideologies and structures. Thus, women can gain strength and autonomy from recognition of their own complex non-unitary subjectivities. This is potentially emancipatory because it envisages alternatives to hegemonic ideologies and structures. The problem is that there are severe social sanctions imposed on women who try to exercise their agency in such an independent manner. This is true in all patriarchal societies, and Egypt is no exception. In fact, in Egypt, women are murdered, usually by their male guardians, for "shaming" their families for violating social norms.[3] The virtually universal acceptance of gender as essentialist and its centrality to Egyptian social norms makes it unlikely that Egyptian women will question their legitimacy and even more unlikely that they will violate these norms voluntarily.

One major problem of holding an essentialist notion of womanhood and femininity is that the link between identity and politics is not acknowledged and so identity cannot be problematized. In fact, anti-feminist women almost always hold this position. The subjectivity, and thus, agency, of such women is underdeveloped by their being socially over-determined, though it is perceived to be biologically determined. That is, they are unaware of the possibility of their ability, if not their right, to take responsibility for the construction of their identity, to accept or modify or reject social constructions, to consciously exercise their agency through self-conscious choices. An individual woman acts but is also acted upon by social forces; but her action also acts upon these social forces. Identity itself becomes a political issue rooted in materialist practices of everyday life. When women accept the essentialist conceptualization of womanhood and femininity, the identity of women is ontologically independent of their social position, the social and material conditions of everyday life, as well as the historical period. This concept of femininity and womanhood is universal, totalizing, and homogenizing. The biological status of being female is the ultimate determiner of gender, of personality, behavior patterns, and social roles.

Despite the lack of consensus about identity in the social sciences, Western conceptualizations of identity are generally inapplicable to Egyptians because of immense cultural differences. The strong emphasis on individualism and ego-centric behavior in Western cultures is completely alien to Egyptian culture. It is also antithetical to Islamic principles of interpersonal relations and identity (El-Messīrī, 1978). Indeed, both Christian and Muslim Egyptians view gender through the prism of religion and most Egyptians are opposed to secular family law (B. 'Ibrahīm, *et al.*, 1997). Many Western feminist ideas about women and about relations between the sexes are, therefore, abhorrent to Egyptians. There are liberating and limiting aspects of Egyptian and Western cultures alike, but understanding these differences in culture is important in conducting a study such as this. The research methodology, particularly the interviewing techniques, employed in this study were designed specifically to address this reality.

The importance of understanding differences between Western and Egyptian conceptualizations of gender and women's status, rights, and roles is apparent in the failure of many international aid projects, not only in Egypt but throughout the underdeveloped world since the 1960's. "Women in development" (WID) and "gender and development" (GAD) paradigms have been developed in the West primarily by middle class white women since the U.N. Women's Conference in Mexico City in 1975. First, WID was developed in an effort to get international aid programs, governmental as well as non-governmental (NGO), to consider the impact of aid on women in the recipient countries. This paradigm was adopted by aid agencies after extensive lobbying by Western feminist groups; however, it soon came under criticism by Western feminists and some middle class women in the recipient countries because women were still conceptualized as passive objects receiving aid; their own needs and desires were not recognized. Women were conceptualized primarily as wives and mothers. In fact, most projects were still directed at men, and only their effects on women were monitored. As a result, feminists developed the GAD paradigm, which sought to involve women as participants in planning and executing aid projects for the development of themselves as individuals as well as of their community. Since the establishment of UNIFEM (1993:inside cover) in 1985, it has sought to provide "...direct financial and technical support to low-income women in developing countries...[and to fund] activities that bring women into mainstream development decision-making." The problem with both of these paradigms is that, one the one hand they are founded upon Western liberal, Protestant concepts such as individualism and materialism that are incompatible with indigenous Egyptian culture, and on the other hand, they are undermined by patriarchal notions of women as nurturers.

For instance, U.S. A.I.D. has been the main source of development funds in Egypt since the 1970's. Despite having a mandatory WID component since 1977, U.S. A.I.D. has "...been treading in a cautious and fragmented manner in the field of women in development, partly due to a perception that WID has a low priority with the GOE [Government of Egypt]" El-Kholy (1987:41). Since then, U.S. A.I.D. has had a full-time WID officer in Cairo with a great deal of responsibility and very good resources to carry out her mandate compared to her counterparts in other aid organizations and government ministries (Confidential interviews). Likewise, the World Bank has had a mandatory WID component to its programs since 1987. Nevertheless, there has been resistance by the Egyptian government as well as men at all levels of Egyptian society to WID and GAD policies. This resistance has also been parallelled by staff in the donor agencies. The result is that little progress has been made involving women recipients in the planning and execution of aid projects. In fact, most of the projects aimed at women emphasized women's roles as wives and mothers, and most of the aid programs addressing family planning, health, nutrition, and hygiene have also been directed primarily at women (World Bank, 1990). Furthermore these projects have been carried out in a coercive, authoritarian manner, with little, if any, regard for the women or their families; and they certainly have not resulted in any improvements in the social or economic status of women. In fact, these programs have backfired completely due to the absence of adequate social security, and so fertility rates remain very high in Egypt.

Feminists in the West as well as in Egypt and other underdeveloped countries continue to criticize aid agencies for premising their WID or GAD policies and development programs on essentialist notions of gender. Even projects designed to integrate women into the paid labor force are premised on the belief that women must fulfill their roles as wives and mothers first and that men have no domestic responsibilities other than being the breadwinner. UNIFEM provides an institutional support for feminists to challenge the current system and develop alternatives. In Egypt, there is a growing nucleus of liberal and radical feminists who are active formally and informally to draw attention to the high costs which injustices to women bring to all Egyptians, male and female, and to society in general. There is also a growing nucleus of pious, Muslim women who are promoting women's rights within Islam and who conceptualize men and women as equal but different. This is rooted in the Muslim concept of complimentarity of the sexes, which is founded upon an essentialist conceptualization of gender.

An essentialist notion of what it means to be a Muslim woman, however, can be equally restricting of individual agency, particularly since Muslims believe that the *Qur'ān* is the literal word of God, and as such, is perfect and unchangeable. On the other hand, it provides a unifying function for most Egyptians and one which stands in stark opposition to the threatening hegemony of Western Christians. Indeed, Islam is identified as the official state religion in Egypt's 1956, 1964, and 1971 constitutions, and in 1980, a constitutional amendment made Islam the basis of all legislation. While most of the respondents did have a relatively narrow conceptualization of what constitutes legitimate Muslim female identity, they also realized that there were numerous socio-economic obstacles which made it difficult, if not impossible, to actually operationalize this identity. Thus, in the course of their everyday lives, they had to act in ways which were contrary to their idealized identity as Muslim women. The gap between the ideal and the real was very apparent to almost all the respondents.

II. Egyptian Islamic Conceptions of Female Identity

The Arab conquest and domination of Egypt from 641 to 1805, and with it the establishment of Islam in Egypt, radically altered the identity of Egyptians and the nature of women's rights. The *Qur'ān* became the guiding force in Muslim societies. Believed by Muslims to be the literal word of God, its written form is unchangeable, immutable, eternal. In Islam, there is no separation of the secular and the sacred, no separation of the physical, social, and metaphysical worlds. The state is necessarily a theocracy; however, unlike early Muslim society in which leaders were considered legitimate only so long as the people approved of them, the version of Islamic theocracy which has survived to the present day in Egypt (and most other officially Islamic states) is one of authoritarian, patriarchal, military dictatorship. Furthermore, the *Qur'ān* provides no directive as to how leadership is determined or changed. (Mernīssī, 1993a; Stowasser, 1996)

Islam remains the basis of women's status, rights, and roles for Muslims. In Islam, men and women are seen as having complementary status, rights, and roles; thus, men and women have very different roles, men as breadwinners and women as nurturers -- an essentialist notion of gender.[4] Men and women are subject to very different expectations, reflecting the double standard of patriarchy. While the *Qur'ān* provides many exact rules to guide the behavior of men and women, not all situations and possibilities are addressed, leaving the door open to interpretation. There is also no doubt that Islam reinforced some patriarchal customs and introduced others, and that this tended to contradict the matrilineal nature of ancient Egyptian culture. The importance of the woman's blood line became "...totally ignored...by the *S̲harīah*, which recognizes only paternal law: children born of a Muslim marriage necessarily belong to the father" (Mernīssī, 1993a:152).

In addition, the controversies surrounding interpretation of the *Qur'ān*, about what other sources legitimately constitute the basis for Islamic law (*S̲harīah*), and about who is allowed to participate in these debates are all serious issues which directly affect the status, rights, and roles of women in Muslim societies, including Egypt.[5] Furthermore, these debates have occurred throughout the history of Islam. It is also noteworthy that women have not been allowed to be judges and that nearly all of the religious scholars and "authorities" have been, and continue to be, men. Nevertheless, it is important to point out that today, there is an increasingly vocal minority of Muslim men and women who assert that the *Qur'ān* has been undermined by the patriarchal nature of other components of Islam as well as the current religious "authorities".[6]

There are at least two primary opposing paradigms of Islam which emerged in the early days of Islam and have survived to the present, each conceptualizing women's status, rights, and roles quite differently. One seeks to reform or modernize women's status, rights, and roles in accordance with the "...perceived inclusive, egalitarian blueprint of the early beginnings..." of Islamic society, while the other seeks to regain or maintain a traditional, patriarchal, essentialist inequality of the sexes, with women firmly subordinated to men (Stowasser, 1996:25). Proponents of the former paradigm reject a literalist interpretation of the *Qur'ān*, while the latter embrace such a perspective. Nevertheless, proponents of both paradigms, "...claim to represent absolute truth and call for action" (*Ibid.*). Thus, any description of women's status, roles, and rights in Islam is necessarily ideological because it entails interpretation of both the *Qur'ān* and the *Sharīah*. The fact remains, though, that the *Qur'ān* is very specific about many of the rights and roles of women, as well as their status vis-à-vis men, and that it reflects the increasingly patriarchal nature of Arabia at that time. Furthermore, Egypt has been a staunchly patriarchal society from the late New Kingdom (about 1200 B.C.), so it is not surprising that Islam has often been interpreted by men to the detriment of women.[7]

The majority of educated, elite, Muslim Egyptian women who argued for women's rights since the 1860's did so within the framework of Islam. This early Egyptian feminist movement grew out of the upheaval wrought upon Egyptian society by European imperialism.[8] Many elite women argued that women's rights in early Islam were lost due to patriarchal cultural influences and that restoring those rights strengthens Islam.[9] Arguments about women's rights and the social equality of the sexes were widespread, both within women's circles and amongst men. Furthermore, both women and men were divided as to the social equality of the sexes (Eliraz, 1982). Increasingly during the 20th century, middle and upper class women were getting involved in the women's movement, which generally located the argument for women's rights within an Islamic modernist framework, asserting that women's rights are guaranteed by Islam (Badran, 1985:67). These early Egyptian feminists kept journals and published poetry, prose, articles, and essays in magazines and newspapers (Baron, 1994; Badran, 1995). They also began their own feminist magazines to provide a voice for women. Women's networks and women's salons were popular. What united these Egyptian women across class and religious barriers was their unhappiness with their own lives and a desire for more opportunities for women. They were particularly upset about the high incidence of divorce and polygamy, the lack of educational opportunities for women, no minimum age for marriage, women's seclusion in the household, and the custom of veiling (Baran, 1994; Eliraz, 1982). Most of their publications were dedicated to improving the rights and status of Egyptian women. Certainly, even well-known women like Malak Hifnī Nāsif, Hudā ash-Sha'rāwī, and Durrīyah Shafīq -- well educated and very privileged -- all adhered to an essentialist conceptualization of gender and women's social roles as proscribed by the *Qur'ān*, even though they each pursued very different strategies (L. 'Ahmed, 1984:120; Badran, 1995; Nelson, 1986 and 1996).

In 1909, Malak Hifnī Nāsif published a book, *an-Nisā'īyāt* (Women's Issues/Affairs), under the pen name Bāhithat 'l-Bādīyah ("Seeker in the Desert"), in which she advocated improvement in the status of women. She believed that Egyptian women were being denied rights guaranteed in Islam, such as the right to education and work. She became a national figure in when she insisted that ten demands to improve women's rights be presented to the first Egyptian Congress in 1911, all the more ironic because she had to get a man to deliver the demands, foreshadowed in *an-Nisā'īyāt* since women were not allowed in the building (Tāhā, 1964:62, cited in Smock and Youssef, 1977:42). She, however, became a junior wife and was secluded in the household for the rest of her life. Nevertheless, she is credited with introducing the concept of "feminist" into the Arabic word *nisā'ī.*[10]

Hudā ash-Sha‘rāwī, returning from a women's conference in Rome in 1923, threw off her veil when disembarking from the ship, launching a modern women's movement in Egypt (Hussein, 1953:440). She redirected her leadership of the Egyptian delegation at this international event upon her return to Egypt, founding the Arab Feminist Union, which was affiliated with the International Alliance for Women's Suffrage. The A.F.U. sought free higher education for women, an end to veiling and seclusion, and reformation of the marriage and divorce legislation. The national branch of the Arab Feminist Union, the Feminist Union of Egypt (or Egyptian Feminist Union), published the feminist magazine, *The Egyptian Woman* (*al-Masrīyah*) (Smock and Youssef, 1977:43). The E.F.U. was "[t]he first explicit identification of middle and upper class Arab women as feminists..." (Badran and Cooke, 1990:xv). Hudā ash-Sha‘rāwī always limited her demands to those sanctioned in the *Qur'ān*, though Ruth Woodsmall (1936:120), an American contemporary, believed that she balanced social reform and Islamic teaching because of political expediency more than from religious conservatism. Nevertheless, according to Hatem (1986b), Hudā ash-Sha‘rāwī, often described as secular and Western-oriented, "...defended Islam on nationalist grounds."

Zaynab al-Ghazālī, a disillusioned member of the Egyptian Feminist Union, founded the Association of Muslim Women (*Jam'ayyah as-Saīydāt al-Muslimāt*) in 1937. As a more traditional religious Muslim, al-Ghazālī believed that Egyptian women must be educated in Islam to escape conditions of backwardness. The A.M.W. was dedicated to social work: it maintained an orphanage, provided assistance to the poor, and provided reconciliation counselling to couples (Hoffman-Ladd, 1985). Although the A.M.W. worked informally with *al-'Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* (the Muslim Brotherhood), in 1948, they became more aligned. In 1964, with 119 branches and three million members, the Association of Muslim Women was banned by the government (Zuhur, 1992). Zaynab al-Ghazālī was imprisoned between 1965-1972, during which time she was tortured for her involvement in helping the banned *al-'Ikhwān al-Muslimūn* (‘Ajāmī, 1993; Hoffman-Ladd, 1985). There is some irony to the fact that al-Ghazālī organized women to remain in the household and maintain strong family ties while she herself became a public figure and spent most of her time outside the household.

Durrīyah Shafīq, a contemporary of Zaynab al-Ghazālī, attended the Sorbonne at the age of sixteen, earning a Ph.D. Much more secular and militant than her predecessors and contemporaries, she went on to become one of Egypt's most controversial feminist activists. She publicly demanded recognition of women's rights as human rights (Shāfiq, 1956). Founding the feminist journal *Bint an-Nīl* (*Daughter of the Nile*) in 1945, she also founded two other feminist journals. In 1948, she founded the feminist organization, *Bint an-Nīl* (Daughter of the Nile Union), which later affiliated with the International Council of Women as the National Council of Egyptian Women. Its mandate was to secure full political rights for women (Nelson, 1986:20;22; Nelson, 1996).

In 1954, Durrīyah Shafīq organized a demonstration which ended with over one thousand women seizing Parliament, demanding women's full political rights in the

Constitution. She and thirteen other members of *Bint an-Nīl* held a hunger strike in the Press Syndicate building and only left eight days later after securing a written promise to help them from the presidents of both chambers (Nelson, 1986:25). That same year, she launched *Bint an-Nīl* as a full-fledged political party, which also formed an all-woman military unit. As an act of defiance towards the British and a show of women's solidarity and equality with men, Durrīyah Shafīq led two hundred women from this military unit and surrounded the Barclay's Bank building in Cairo, a symbol of British power. Mob violence ensued, leaving downtown Cairo in burned ruins, but she had made her point: women's emancipation and national liberation could not occur separately and much work had to be done to link them in the minds of both the elites and the populace (*Ibid.*:22-24).

Durrīyah Shafīq also tried to register as a candidate in the Cairo district of 'Abdīn, even though electoral laws denied women the right to vote and the right to stand for public office. Hundreds of poor women tried to vote for her, but their votes and her candidacy were declared unacceptable (Nelson, 1986:25). As a result, a committee of religious leaders (*shīyūkh*) issued a declaration "stating that women were unfit for the vote on the grounds that they are 'swayed by emotion and are of unstable judgement. Whereas men are impartial and balanced, women stray from the path of wisdom even when they have the advantages of a good education'" (L. 'Ahmed, 1984:121). As a result of the efforts of Durrīyah Shafīq, women's right to vote was guaranteed in the 1956 Constitution, though it was not mandatory as it was for men (Nelson, 1986:27). Undeterred, Durrīyah Shafīq refused to accept the differential political rights of men and women and went on another hunger strike in 1957, after Israeli occupation of Egyptian land, issuing a press statement to President Nāsir and the international press denouncing Nāsir as a dictator. Nāsir had her put under house arrest, banned her organizations and her name in print (*Ibid.*).

In contrast to her predecessors, Durrīyah Shafīq was militant in a way that was decidedly "unladylike" in Egypt. Many of her supporters deserted her when she needed them the most; even they denounced her as a traitor, as did all other women's organizations. After being jailed by Nāsir, she disappeared from public life and led a more solitary life (Nelson, 1986:27). Falling from her balcony, her death is as controversial as her life. Whether she jumped or was pushed, Durrīyah Shafīq was out of step with Egyptian society, and most Egyptian feminists today are unwilling to pay such a high price.

After the death of President Nāsir, Sadāt broke with his predecessors by signing a peace treaty with Israel and accepting massive U.S. aid. His "Open Door" policy fostered a friendly climate for moderate liberal feminism. For the first time in Egyptian history, Sadāt's wife, Jihān, took on the role of "first lady" (Sadāt, 1987). Coinciding with the U.N. World Decade for Women (1975-1985), she publicly sponsored many charities concerned with providing social services to "politically neutral" marginalized groups such as handicapped children, orphans, indigent women widowed by war, etc. She also championed women's civil rights as part of Sadāt's separation of state and religion. It is widely believed that she inspired her husband to sign several international conventions on women's rights, *albeit* with some serious reservations registered by the Egyptian government. Revision of the Personal Status

Laws in 1979 is also credited to her influence, and are frequently referred to as "Jihān's Law" (al-'Alī, 1997:178). Despite these advances, the government kept strict control over all organizations, refusing to allow freedom of assembly. Liberal feminist and Muslim women's organizations were tolerated, but radical and socialist feminists were not. Nevertheless, during the 1970's, there was a proliferation of women's organizations in Egypt and significant defiance of the government by radical and socialist feminists. The severe patriarchal backlash to Sadāt's policies by militant Islamic fundamentalists, however, made it even more difficult for Egyptian feminists to organize publicly. Under the Mubārak regime, tight control over all organizations and public hostility to women's rights discourse has continued to make it very difficult for women to be publicly identified as feminists (al-'Alī, 1997; Badran, 1993 and 1995; confidential interviews). Indeed, "...the overall atmosphere of crisis and defeat...is persistent among all of Egypt's intellectuals and political activists (*Op. cit.*:181). Thus, the majority of Egyptian women who work to improve the status and rights of women do so through organizations. They are also primarily middle class and believe that the "...only feasible way to reach Egyptian women and men is within the frame of Islam" (al-'Alī, 1997:183; confidential interviews).

Since the days of Durrīyah Shafiq , the only Egyptian feminist willing to pay the price for openly challenging traditional, patriarchal Islam and Egyptian society is Nawāl as-Sa'dāwī. A psychiatrist and novelist, "Nawāl as-Sa'dāwī has been a very controversial person for most of her life, not only in her native Egypt but also in the West" (Belcher El-Nahhas, 1998:141). Since being dismissed from her post as Director of Public Health for writing a frank book about sex and politics (El-Sa'adāwī, 1971), she was imprisoned by Sadāt in 1981 and has been a *persona non grata* in Egypt, gagged by the government and hated by the fundamentalists. She has lived in exile in the U.S.A. and Europe (1992-1996), though she has returned to Egypt after finding herself as marginalized in the West as she was in her own country (El-Sa'adāwī, 1997).

Unlike most of her predecessors, Nawāl as-Sa'dāwī is an avowed socialist feminist who demands secularism and democracy with full equality of the sexes. While accepting spiritual Islam, she rejects patriarchal, political Islam as well as capitalism and imperialism. She has written extensively and lectured globally in English as well as in Arabic. She has published articles and essays in newspapers, women's magazines, and academic journals, as well as numerous books. Her theoretical analysis is grounded in the praxis of her everyday life, using examples which are simple but powerful and which speak to all of us as individuals. Linkage between the local, regional, national, and international is also central to her analysis.

A dissident all her life, Nawāl as-Sa'dāwī defied convention to become a physician in 1955 and divorced two husbands because they refused to allow her to write. In 1982, she organized the Arab Women's Solidarity Association (*Jam'ayyah at-Taḍḍamun li-l-Mara'h al-'Arabīyah*), which gained consultative status with the U.N. Economic and Social Council and also sent a delegation to the Nairobi Conference on Women in 1985, after which the Egyptian government reluctantly allowed A.W.S.A., with 3,000 members, to register as a legal organization. The A.W.S.A. was dedicated to promote Arab women politically, culturally, socially, and economically as well as Arab society in general internationally (Toubia, 1988:1). Its slogans were "Unveiling the Mind" and "Solidarity and Power of Women" and it also published a magazine, *Nūn*, with a subscription of 5,000.[11] A.W.S.A. carried out a number of very controversial campaigns, including challenging the government's birth control programs. In September 1986, A.W.S.A. organized an international conference in Cairo on the "Challenges Confronting Arab Women at the End of the 20th Century". Boycotted by Islamic fundamentalists and attacked by some government newspapers, the conference was extremely controversial. A.W.S.A. members were labelled "atheist infidels"and charged with treason for accepting monetary contributions from non-Arab, non-Muslim sources (*Ibid.*:6-7). Both the organization and the magazine were banned by the Egyptian government in June 1991; A.W.S.A. subsequently challenged the ban in the state Council Court (El-Sa'adāwī, 1997:44).

Opposing patriarchy, capitalism, and imperialism, Nawāl as-Sa'dāwī continues to demand a "...New World Order which is based on peace, justice, freedom, equality, and democracy for all states and for all people in the world...and end to all forms of injustice" (Belcher El-Nahhas, 1998:141). She criticizes the North and the South, the West and Egypt, "...scathingly sarcastic at times in her unravelling of many paradoxes to unveil the political and economic interests behind them" (*Ibid.*). Her unequivocal demand for full equality of the sexes and elimination of all forms of oppression and all bases of inequality has alienated her from almost all Egyptians. Most Muslim Egyptians believe that Nawāl as-Sa'dāwī is immoral and has a corrupting influence on society, that she is a communist, an atheist, and a disobedient wife. In Egypt, she has been labelled a "radical" Western-oriented feminist (*nassawīyah*) since the publication of her book, *al-Mar'ah wa-l-'Arabīyah* (Woman and Sex) in 1971 (al-'Alī, 1997:179; confidential interviews). Nawāl as-Sa'dāwī's opposition to Islamist notions of gender and her confrontational strategies were beyond the pale for most Egyptians. Liberal feminist Egyptian women oppose her criticism of capitalism and U.S. influence over Egypt. Radical Egyptian feminists with whom I spoke said that they opposed her because of her methods. They explained that her open opposition to patriarchy and capitalism created a vicious backlash which makes it very difficult for others to work on women's rights issues, even within the framework of Islam and Egyptian tradition. Nevertheless, by making many previously taboo subjects public issues, Nawāl as-Sa'dāwī has generated public debate about feminism during the past twenty-five years which has, at the very least, encouraged Egyptian women to ascertain, if not secure, their rights in Islam.

Ironically, as-Sa'dāwī's support, through A.W.S.A., of the 1979 Personal Status Laws and opposition to its amendment in 1985 catalyzed a split in the Egyptian women's movement. The *'it-Tihād an-Nisā'ī at-Taqadummi* (Progressive Women's Union of the *Tagamm'u* Party), a nationalist leftist group, and the Islamist groups opposed the 1979 law, though for very different reasons: the former because it had been passed unconstitutionally by Presidential decree and the latter because it undermined men's control over women (al-'Ali, 1997:178). Furthermore, as-Sa'dāwī opposed women's groups being affiliated with political parties, though most political parties had such organizations. Furthermore, even

Nawāl as-Sa'dāwī's supporters were alienated from her because of her alleged autocratic control over A.W.S.A. and the involvement of her family members (*Ibid.*:179-180; confidential interviews). Thus, as discussed above, most Egyptian feminists prefer to work collectively through organizations and avoid public attention as individuals.

Interestingly, there has been a number of Islamist Egyptian women who not only believe that Islam is compatible with United Nations' standards of women's rights but who also are outspoken and confrontational (al-'Alī, 1997:183). Known as "feminist reformists", they assert that Islam was adversely affected by pre-Islamic patriarchal beliefs and practices, and that establishing a truly Islamic state would restore women's rights in Islam. For instance, Zaynab Radwān, Cairo University professor of Islamic philosophy, published Islam and Women's Issues, and is publicly active in asserting women's rights in Islam (*Ibid.*:184). Hibba Ra'uf 'Izzat, a teaching assistant in political science at Cairo University, has also been a very outspoken supporter of women's rights in Islam and asserts an Islamic theory of women's liberation (*Ibid.*). Her position is most closely affiliated to that of *al-'Ikhwān al-Muslimīn* (the Muslim Brotherhood), a "moderate" Islamic fundamentalist organization. Ironically, while she rejects the label "feminist" because it "negates religion", she also criticizes other Islamist women's rights activists like Zaynab al-Ghazālī and Safīnāz Kāzim "...for considering women's liberation a Western idea, which prevented them from making their own interpretation about women's problems" (*Ibid.*). Both Radwān and 'Izzat reject the idea that women's liberation is a Western ideal, believing instead that women's liberation is rooted in Islam, and so, predates its development in the West.

At the heart of the debate about women's status and rights in Egyptian society is the question of "authentic" Egyptian values and identity (Shukrallah, 1992). The splits are not only between Islamic, Egyptian versus secular, Western identities but also amongst different classes which have "...appropriated different aspects of Western culture" (al-'Alī, 1997:185). It also involves a belief that Egyptian society is distorted by the amount of Western influence, though some blame the West while others blame the Egyptian government and other institutions for suffocating intellectual and cultural creativity (*Ibid.*:186; Huband, 1998). Individuals and organizations debating the status and rights of women are invariably caught up in this debate about what constitutes authentic Egyptian identity. While some continue to attack their perceived opponents, others have begun a dialogue in an attempt to bridge the gap and make progress in improving the status and rights of Egyptian women (al-'Alī, 1997:185; 'Abū-Odeh, 1992 and 1993). Thus, while fragmentation and polarization of women's rights activism continues, there is a conscious effort by Egyptian women to speak directly to each other and their families about the problems they face in an effort to find common ground for improving their status and rights within the family as well as in society ('Abū-Odeh, 1992 and 1993; al-'Alī, 1997). Egyptian women of all political and religious ideologies continue to be active in this debate privately as well as publicly.

Concern about the low status of Egyptian women and their exclusion from public life was high during the pre-revolutionary period (1882-1952), both inside Egypt and in the West. Women's rights, however, were generally subordinated to the nationalist struggle. Since then, significant progress has been made in securing human and civil rights for Egyptian women, and women have organized more publicly and more militantly. It is clear that Egyptian women have not been passive recipients of change handed down to them by male liberators, but rather have been active participants in demanding their rights in Islam, in shaping their roles in society as well as citizens in the nation-state, not only during the long struggle for national liberation, but right into the present (Badran, 1985; Makram-Ebeid, 1993).

III. Selected Literature Review: Studies of Cairene Women

Because of the strategic political and economic importance of Egypt to U.S. neo-imperialists interests since World War II, all aspects of Egypt -- physical as well as social -- have been extensively researched and studied. Much of this research has been funded by U.S. sources, both governmental and non-governmental. Many of the researchers are U.S. citizens, though other foreigners as well as Egyptians have received U.S. funding for research in Egypt. This includes research about Egyptian women. Furthermore, since the rise of militant Islamic fundamentalism throughout the Middle East, there has been a great deal of research on Muslims, including Muslim women. Because there is such a vast amount of literature focusing on Muslim women, including Egyptian women, it is virtually impossible to do a comprehensive literature review even if it were restricted to Egyptian women. In addition, while there are numerous studies of Egyptian women living in rural areas in different regions of the country, most are inappropriate for comparison to this study because the lives of women in rural areas are substantially different than those of Cairene women.

Furthermore, most rural areas are much more homogeneous in ethnicity, religion, and/or culture than is the case in Cairo. Many of the studies conducted in Egypt have been based on large-scale surveys carried out by researchers who do not know their respondents, and are usually not from the same place. Therefore, this literature review will focus on that literature which is most relevant to this study, those which more closely parallel this study: studies carried out since the 1950's which focus on women living in the greater Cairo region, particularly those using qualitative sociological or anthropological approaches involving personal interviews with Cairene women. The literature review is organized according to general theme as well as time frame, beginning with general ethnographies of Cairene women, then more specific foci such as the nature of marriage, why some women veil, household decision-making, distinction amongst some groups, effects of male labor migration, women's participation in public life, Egyptian identities, and ending with a more comprehensive view of the contemporary crisis in Egypt which raises issues not generally addressed in the literature.

Egyptian social anthropologist, Laila El-Hamamsy (1970) found that by the 1950's, there had been a significant breakdown in traditional attitudes about marriage amongst urban Egyptian women: they were postponing marriage in order to attain higher levels of education, demanding more say in the choice of a husband, and wanting to marry men their own age. U.S. social anthropologist, Andrea Rugh (1984) found that during the early 1980's, urban middle and upper class Egyptian women preferred romantic courtships, love matches (companionate marriage), and strong marital bonds even if they were arranged by friends and/or family, whereas the urban lower and lower-middle classes still preferred arranged marriages with stronger consanguineal ties and a weaker marital bond (even though first cousins were preferred as spouses) because of their more tenuous economic circumstances.

Egyptian writer Nayra ʻAtiya (1982) interviewed five Cairene women over a period of several months, enabling them to present their stories as self-portraits and to give outsiders an opportunity to know more about their struggles. Although the number of women is very small, the depth and breadth of the portrayal of their lives is much greater than that in most of the other studies cited. Four of the five had little education and were migrants from the countryside, while the fifth was middle class and urban, though also impoverished. The stories are told in the first person by each respondent and reveal their everyday experiences with such things as polygamous marriage, divorce, female genital mutilation, marriage, death of children, superstition, subsistence existence, and generalized devaluation, if not hatred, towards women. This was the first of what would be many ethnographies about ordinary women in Cairo, but it remains unique in its narrative technique of first person voice.

More recently, U.S. social anthropologist, Andrea Rugh (1985:273-288), conducted a five year study (1976-1981) of lower-middle-class women in Būlāq, a poor district in central Cairo, and found that women were valued and given status within the community as well as the family by successfully fulfilling their feminine gender roles: having many children, particularly sons; being good housekeepers; and being obedient wives. Furthermore, any activities which interfered with these roles and/or took the woman away from the household was strongly discouraged by both family and community. The status and reputation of a woman reflected on the honor of her entire family of origin and of procreation. Rugh found that many of the women in this study were employed out of economic necessity, but their employment was considered shameful and inappropriate because it highlighted the inability of the husband to provide for his family and it cast doubt on the woman's reputation, since she mixed with unrelated men. While these values remained strong, Rugh perceived a shift in attitude about girls' education. Earlier girls were trained to be housewives and mothers by their own mothers and female kin at home, gaining only primary schooling, if any formal education at all. With accelerating inflation and rising expectations for consumer goods and minimum life-styles, there was more pressure on women to work. Because better educated girls could obtain better paying employment, and indeed also have a better chance of marrying up the class hierarchy, parents allowed and encouraged girls to stay in school longer. Nevertheless, the essentialist perception of gender with segregated gender roles remained the same and women's employment continued to be viewed as a necessary evil which women accepted with "...considerable reluctance" (Rugh, 1985:288).

Evelyn Early (1985), a U.S. social anthropologist, also conducted a three year ethnography in Būlāq. While she does provide excepts from interviews, most of the book consists of her observations and interpretation of *baladī* life, how lower and middle class

Egyptians treated her, distinctions respondents made between *baladī* ("indigenous") and *'afrāngī* ("foreign") traits and behavior, and her explanation of the national social, political, and economic context as well as that of the respondents. The content of this book closely parallels that of many novels by Naguib Mahfouz, and hence, does not contribute much to a better understanding of Cairene society (Antonius, 1998).

Nawāl al-Messīrī Nadīm (1985), an Egyptian social anthropologist, conducted an ethnographic study of 117 families in 'ad-Darb 'al-'Ahmar, one of the oldest and most crowded neighborhoods of Cairo. She looks at the physical as well as the social environment of these Cairene women. Some of her observations include the acute and chronic housing shortage, overcrowding, residential segregation by region of origin, lack of basic utilities including water, the private nature of "public" space, women's relief when husbands are not in the household, community involvement in domestic disputes, and the expectation that husbands supervise their wives and restrict their freedom. Despite the complementarity of gender roles (men as breadwinner, women as housewives), some women are employed. Nevertheless, women never take on the role of breadwinner and men never do housework, even if their wives work full-time and even if the husband is unemployed. Girls who earn an income, however, are given more privileges than those who are in school because the former are contributing to family subsistence. Power and status are generally linked to income, and factors such as education, ethnicity, and family background are secondary. The men, however, tend to be "excessive spenders" and so families tend to live from day to day, falling into debt easily. Thus, women devise means of extracting as much money from their husbands as possible to cover the costs of special events and emergencies. Men and women are locked into a power struggle over control of family income and each uses various control mechanisms on the other to maximize their goals and their status. Roles, however, are rigidly defined in terms of gender, which is perceived as essentialist.

Homa Hoodfar, an Iranian social anthropologist, published a number of articles, book chapters, and a book based on research she carried out research in Cairo during the early1980's and again during the early 1990's. Her 1986 publication centered on child-care, whereas her 1991 and 1993b publications focus on the recent phenomenon of women re-veiling. Hoodfar found that many Egyptian women adopted the veil simply to maximize their freedom to participate in public life, and as a necessity to survive economically.

More recently, MacLeod (1991), an Iraqi-American political scientist, interviewed 85 women in 28 households in lower and lower-middle class neighborhoods in the greater Cairo area over a five year period (1983-1988) to ascertain why women veil. MacLeod invokes Foucault's notions of the body as a site of struggle and the diffuse and contradictory aspects of power relations. The confusion about gender which typifies contemporary Egyptian society is expressed in the ambiguous, yet passionate, reactions of women to male-female inequality. The veil is most symbolic of this. While the reasons for veiling differ widely amongst individual women, MacLeod (*Ibid.*:143) concludes that at the macro-level, women's decisions and behavior are shaped primarily by gender within the context of unequal power relations between the sexes: "...women's resistance to control and constraint is neither direct nor unequivocal. It is instead inextricably coupled with elements of acquiescence and accommodation" Even when women's experiences in everyday life contradict their notion of propriety, they seem to be unable to formulate any alternative ideology or to take direct action in their own interest. "The mixed message, the accommodating protest, then, which women in this study portray, would be regarded as inevitable because of the structural position these women inhabit within the larger society, a position effectively precluding the ability to think progressively on their own about their situation and to act in accordance with their ideas", an observation akin to those made by of Gramsci about the working class (*Ibid.*:144). Class, gender, and a host of other factors, thus, both cloud and frame the ideas and behavior of the respondents, leaving them without any identifiable, single oppressor. Therefore, the opportunity for overt confrontation does not seem to exist. Furthermore, MacLeod found that Western alternatives were not acceptable to the respondents. Rather, they wanted to be rid of all the pressures which prevented them from enacting gender and fulfilling their gender roles. They wanted to be valued as mothers and wives, and some also wanted to be valued as productive workers at home as well as in the labor market. They wanted "women's work" to regain the higher status which they believed it had in more traditional times. Given the forces of globalization, however, higher status for "women's work" and a return to gender complimentarity and segregated gender roles are not likely to occur.

Egyptian social anthropologist, S̲harīfa Zuhuf (1992:19) also interviewed fifty Cairene women aged twenty to seventy-eight, veiled and unveiled, from all social classes in 1988 to ascertain their reasons for veiling or not veiling and "...to identify common components in the backgrounds of those who share similar views or exhibit similar behavior." She observed that veiled women did not constitute a homogeneous group and that social expectations of class are at least as important as economic expectations of class (*Ibid.*:24). She found a plurality of competing gender images and rising tension and even intolerance amongst groups. Three archetypal female identities remain idealized by different groups in Egypt today: *bint al-balad*, virtuous veiled woman (*muḥaggabah* and *munaqqabah*), and unveiled, elite woman. There are both commonalities and major disagreements amongst them. Zuhuf's primary focus was on ascertaining why women adopted the *hijāb*. Her veiled respondents cited moral reasons as their primary motivation, minimizing social and economic pressures. Zuhuf believes that it was their quest for a unified psyche and an authentic identity, as much a reaction to "Westoxification" of Egyptian society as it is with a revival of Islamic fundamentalism, which motivated them to become *muḥaggabāt*. Nevertheless, the war over legitimate female identity amongst the groups is both ideological and physical and involves vastly different political, social, and moral conceptualizations of womanhood. While Zuhuf recognizes the limited flexibility extended by Islamicists to attract more female adherents to becoming *muḥaggabāt*, she warns that this flexibility is not extended to the future. In fact, she seems to be afraid that an Islamicist government in Egypt would be intolerant of other identities and groups, but she offers no suggestions for overcoming the current crises.

MacLeod (1996) also addressed the double bind that lower-middle class Cairene women, whom she refers to as "ordinary" women, found themselves caught in as a result of increased education (high school) and higher aspirations for job satisfaction in the civil service but faced with the reality of underemployment, increased economic insecurity and drop in standard of living, as well as loss of traditional sources of security within the family and neighborhood. These women felt caught in contradictory forces which deny them the opportunity to fulfill their desire to be productive workers in satisfying jobs as well as successful wives and mothers. MacLeod (*Ibid.*:43) discusses "...the importance of family in Egyptian culture [which] elevates...[the] role [of women as mothers] to great heights; women as mothers are respected and even idolized...[as] women's most important responsibilities and the culmination of their linked role as wife..." MacLeod also discusses the negative image of woman as evil temptress, and the consequent mechanisms, including extensive sexual harassment, to control women both inside and outside the household, making the role of daughter and wife particularly precarious for women. Both men and women believed that they are significantly different by nature and that this is a good thing, but the forces of modernization are interfering with this natural order. Neither the forces of traditionalism nor the forces of modernity provide these women with satisfactory identities, roles, or opportunities for self-development as well as contributing to social development.

Hoodfar (1996b and 1997a) also addresses household decision-making and control with several sub-foci, including marriage and gender roles, strategies men employ to become better breadwinners, attitudes and behavior regarding women's paid employment and its effect on the family, women's non-monetary contributions to the household, the significance of women's networking and membership in informal neighborhood associations to improve family welfare, and the role of sexuality and fertility in the lives of men and women. Hoodfar interviewed the members of 62 households living in three poor districts near central Cairo. She was particularly interested in the survival strategies amongst the Cairene poor as well as the mechanisms of family and social reproduction in light of the macro-level changes occurring in society. Her primary motivation for the research was to investigate the lives of ordinary people, particularly the poor who constitute the majority of Egyptians, since much of the literature at that time focussed on national policies and the interests and activities of the elite. With high unemployment, low wages, and no social safety net, poor Egyptians must be extremely adaptable just to survive. While many of her respondents modified their views about the necessity of girls being educated because economic uncertainty made men less reliable breadwinners, they were unhappy about this new reality and were particularly discontent about the commercialization and Westernization of society. With decreased government subsidies and government services, rising costs, low wages, and high unemployment, many of women's traditional household activities have been lost to the market, and so there is increased pressure on women to earn cash even though their opportunities to do so are actually declining. Thus, the balance between men and women in the household has been tipped in favor of the higher income-earner and so women's non-cash household subsistence activities have become devalued. Because of this economic reality as well as the traditional necessity of women obeying their husbands as superior, the age gap between husbands and wives is growing, though the maternal kin network became stronger.

Divorce was not an option for most couples because of the cost. Female genital mutilation was practiced and supported by the respondents, who believed, contrary to Western belief, that this practice enhanced the sexuality and fertility of women. Hoodfar's conclusions, like those in her other publications, are that the changes in attitude and behavior enforced by economic necessity have not been liberatory. Rather, they have reinforced traditional, patriarchal notions of gender and gender roles as well as socio-economic inequalities between the sexes as well as amongst the classes.

Another set of studies focusses on the sustained high levels of in-migration from rural areas on Cairene residents, old and new. American urban geographer, Janet 'Abū-Lughod (1961b, 1964, 1965b, and 1969), as well as Derek Hopwood (1985) and 'Amira Sonbol (1988) reported a ruralization or villagization of Cairo rather than the urbanization of its inhabitants due to the high rate of in-migration from rural areas and the consistent contact they maintain with their rural kin. More recently, Helen Watson (1992 and 1994a) studied the residents of the City of the Dead (cemetery) and found that their physical segregation from other city-dwellers and their low level of education helped to maintain their replication of rural life and distinct sense of identity while living in the midst of the bustle of inner city Cairo. Watson found that poverty reduces the power and authority of men over their families but it increases solidarity and sociability amongst women, further marginalizing men. Although the level of marital conflict and domestic violence is high amongst these couples, divorce is much lower than amongst other Cairene populations because of the solidarity of the community, which facilitates reconciliation. The high cost of the *mahr* (bride price or dowry) as well as of maintenance for the ex-wife and a new wife for poor couples are also significant barriers to divorce. Increased poverty and antagonism caused by divorce threatens reciprocal assistance and solidarity within the family and the community. Thus, members of this population avoid divorce and secondary education, just as they avoid any breakdown in traditional customs which they associate with corruption and immorality caused by Westernization.

Watson (1994a) found that women were able to exert a great deal of control over resolving marital and/or family disputes because they monopolized much of the relevant information necessary for mediation, even though the negotiators were men. Watson's observation and interpretation of the differences between the roles of men and women in marital dispute mediation differs markedly from that of Unni Wikan's (1980) study of poor families in Būlāq, Cairo. Wikan, a Norwegian social anthropologist, casts the behavior of men and women in stereotypical patriarchal gendered ways: men are objective, cautious and rational whereas women are subjective, spontaneous, and emotional. Wikan asserted that men control the process because they set the rules and reach a solution acceptable to all parties by virtue of their male authority and rationality, compared to women who lack authority and set few, if any, rules. While Wikan evaluates the style of women's involvement in negotiations negatively, Watson does not. In fact, Watson believes that it is women's understanding of the emotional and subjective aspects of the dispute which contribute to its resolution. Furthermore, while Wikan focuses on the public aspect of negotiations and mediation, Watson believes that women are the real power behind the throne through their control of information flowing to male negotiators behind closed doors.

Another of Watson's (1994a) findings relevant to this study is that women in the City of the Dead who had no close male kin were represented by a "neutral" male in their dealings with community members. This, along with her other findings, reinforce the general finding that despite increasing state usurpation of patriarchal control over individuals, without adequate social security provided by the state, the family remains the basic unit of Egyptian society and community solidarity ensures survival. Thus, the traditional high value placed on marriage remains the norm.

Homa Hoodfar (1993a, 1996a, 1997b) also studied the effects of male labor migration abroad on the lower and middle class wives left behind in lower class neighborhoods in Gīzah, greater Cairo. While lower class wives gained more independence and power within the family, particularly in decision-making over resources, middle class women lost influence because their relative equality with their husbands had been premised on similar income levels. Hence, the status and identity of middle class women were seriously eroded as a result of male migration. Gender roles for men and women were broadened, since women generally had more responsibilities and freedom during their husbands' absence and the husbands generally had to look after their own subsistence needs for the first time, but working abroad intensified women's economic dependence on men and reinforced men's primary role as breadwinner. Being a more successful breadwinner, hence, also intensified husbands' desire to be head of the household and exercise authority over it. Hoodfar concluded that traditional, patriarchal marriage norms and gender roles were strengthened by male migration abroad.

A 1968 survey of public opinion conducted in Cairo found that one-third of Cairenes objected to women's participation in public life, particularly public affairs because they believed that women are not equal to men, that women belong exclusively in the household, and that political life is a violation of Egyptian customs, traditions, and Islam (Diab, 1968). Not surprisingly, more men than women held these views, as did the older, less educated, lower class Cairenes. Smock and Youssef (1977:72) commented that while upper class women are more likely to be active in public affairs,

> ...they are tolerated because of their social background, but they are rarely taken seriously. One accusation leveled at them is that they seek to imitate the fashion of European ladies ('Abdel-Kader, 1973:87), and the tone and scope of the activities of many of these associations frequently lend themselves to this charge.

Two ethnographic studies focusing on Egyptian identity conducted by Egyptian social anthropologists have become classics. The first was carried out in the village of Silwa and later in al-Bashar by Hāmid 'Ammār (1954 and 1964) and the second was conducted by Sawsan El-Messīrī (1978) primarily in the popular quarters of inner-city Cairo. Although Egyptian social categories are complex in the possible combination of defining factors, prior to the 20th century, El-Messīrī describes them in two broad social categories, those who were *'awlād al-balad* ("sons of the country") and those who were not. The former were the Egyptian masses who spoke Arabic, shared a common culture, while the latter were primarily foreign elites and their Egyptian supporters who spoke a foreign language, had a foreign culture, did not identify with the indigenous population, and exploited the indigenous population. This latter group included middle class and rich Copts who identified with and often collaborated with foreign Muslim rulers and later with Christian Westerners. Westernization, however, broke down the homogeneity of the indigenous population, eventually creating not only an economic gap but also a social gap between Westernized Egyptians and the *'awlād al-balad*. Thus, while there had been general solidarity amongst all indigenous groups (except for Copts in some circumstances) against the foreign ruling elite, by 1952, the indigenous population itself was polarized and the status of *'awlād al-balad* plummeted. This discontinuity between the past and present identity of the middle and upper classes as well as between Copts and Muslims has caused a great deal of social dislocation and consequent alienation of the masses despite Nāsir's serious attempt to develop a more authentic identity to unify Egyptians. The attractiveness of the "pull" factors for Westernization today are much greater than those presented by the *'awlād al-balad* which means that even many *'awlād al-balad* emulate European models of "success", reinforcing Western elitist tendencies in contemporary Egyptian society. She addresses the phenomenon of the *k͟hawāgah* complex and the rejection of *'ibn az-zawāt* ("son of an aristocrat") by most Egyptians as a foreign and alien identity. El-Messīrī presents in great detail the views of all Cairene strata about the *'awlād al-balad* as well as the views of the *'awlād al-balad* about all other Cairene strata. El-Messīrī's (1978:105) conclusion is that "[w]hen and how the traditional past will meet with the modern present to produce an authentic identity is the dilemma of the *'awlād al-balad*, and perhaps this is also the main crisis of Egyptians in the twentieth century." The conclusion, however, upon which both 'Ammār and El-Messīrī agree, is that *'ibn* and *bint al-balad* ("son and daughter of the country") represent an authentic indigenous Egyptian identity which has weathered millennia of foreign domination. Furthermore, one could add that it has made a dramatic comeback since its grafting onto the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism.

More recently, Egyptian social anthropologist Laila S͟hukry El-Hamamsy (1985) also addresses contemporary Egyptian identity from a historical perspective. Her findings are very similar to those of El-Messīrī (1978). Her intense dislike, if not hatred, for the domination of Egyptians by foreign and comprador elites, including Copts, is palpable. Nevertheless, her following observation no longer rings true:

> [t]he current trend to glorify the Egyptian common man and to reject the Turkish aristocracy and the alienated, Westernized Egyptian can be seen clearly in the themes of contemporary novels and plays. In fact, social pressures today are such that it would be difficult to find someone who would boast publicly of his Turkish origins...[as] there are few who would not feel ashamed if they did not master the Arabic language, or if they appeared uninformed about Egyptian society and its cultural traditions. (El-Hamamsy, 1985:55)

In addition, her comment about Egyptian society being more unified is also quite outdated now: "...the effect of the recent simultaneous attempts to modernize the country and to affirm Egyptian culture has been the development of a more culturally integrated, less schizophrenic society" (El-Hamamsy, 1985:55), even though it is true that "...a cultural cleavage between the urban and peasant societies" still exists (*Ibid.*). Although she acknowledges that the word "Arab" has had very negative connotations in Egypt, she believes that Egyptians have finally come to accept an Islamic, Arab identity as authentic, à la Nāsir, and that Egyptians believe they are part of the great Arab nation. Much of her conclusion is wishful thinking, as evidenced in the reality of everyday life in Egypt and the Middle East, but her discussion of other aspects of the identity crisis in Egypt remain relevant.

Sonbol (1988) has provided a detailed and comprehensive description of contemporary Egyptian society in order to develop an analysis of the latest resurgency of militant Islamic fundamentalism. Although this text does not satisfy the criteria established above for inclusion in this literature review, primarily because it was not an empirical study based on interviews with women, it is unique not only because of its honest revelation of the serious problems experienced by ordinary people but also because she addresses particular contemporary problems that have thus far not been addressed. Some of these topics include drugs; alienation; complete breakdown of family structure and societal infrastructure; villagization of cities; violence; growing gap between rich and poor; vast gap between government rhetoric about democracy and freedom and the reality of a militaristic, repressive and even totalitarian regime; and persistent lack of trust of the government by most people. In addition, she addresses the extreme stress put on education as a vehicle of social mobility and rising frustration of underemployed and unemployed educated Egyptians: great social distinctions amongst those with less than high school, high school, and post-secondary education but lack of school facilities and buildings, overcrowding, and feeling of unfairness in test grading in the educational system, resulting in dissatisfaction with poor quality of government education in general and inaccessibility of private education for most Egyptians. Another set of concerns addressed by Sonbol includes the necessity of conformity for family and societal acceptance: extreme control over girls and women linked to family honor and apostasy being seen as reason for most offenses and even social problems. Sa'udi Arabian financing of militant Islamic fundamentalists to destabilize and further Islamicize the Egyptian government is another serious problem discussed by Sonbol: government fear that a civil war is imminent with great loss of life, leading to severe repression of suspected Islamicists; competitive antagonism between Muslims and Copts; tightened government control over use of mosques and churches; lack of freedom to debate interpretations of Islam; and a strong non-Islamic culture competing with Islam as the focus of popular identification and allegiance. Sonbol (1988) provides a well integrated analysis of the contemporary crises in Egyptian society.

My own observations and research about Egyptian society which frame this study closely parallel those of Sonbol, as do many of the difficulties which MacLeod and Rugh encountered conducting their research. Most of the cited studies, however, did not provide excerpts from the interviews with respondents, and those which did, provided only minimal comments by respondents. Much of the text in these studies consisted of the authors' interpretation and analysis of the issues addressed. This study provides a much greater voice by respondents. This study, however, also differs significantly from those cited above because of the importance my respondents placed on the hierarchy of categories utilized in their conceptualization of gender (female identity or femininity). Thus, the primary emphasis on the female body itself was integral not only to femininity but also to authentic Egyptian identity. Attire, adornment, character, and roles were also important, but were successively removed from immediate categorization of a woman's identity. Therefore, this study not only gives respondents a greater voice in the text, but it also uses their categories of conceptualization about gender and female identity. Furthermore, while most of the studies cited focussed primarily upon lower-middle class Cairene women, a much greater percentage of my respondents are from the new middle class, the upper-middle class, and the elite. Another significant difference between this study and those cited is the fact that I knew most of my respondents very well over a long period of time prior to deciding to do the study. This was a major benefit in overcoming problems of reliability and validity.

Chapter Two End Notes

1

My conceptualization of subjectivity is similar to that defined by de Lauretis (1984) as what one perceives and comprehends as subjective.

In addition to sources cited in the text, see the following for various discussions about the Self and/or identity (individual as well as social): Adler and Adler (1989), Alcoff (1988), Belenky, *et al.* (1986), Best and Connelly (1979), Bloom (1996), Breakwell (1979 and 1986), Breakwell and Canter (1993), Cohen (1994), Duveen (1990), Fõrnas (1995, Gergen (1991), Gergen and Davs (1985), Gergen and Gergen (1984), M. Gergen and Davis (1997), Giddens (1991), Ireland (1993), Ridgeway (1991), el-Saffar (1991), Smith (1988), Weigert (1986), Wetherell (1982), and Wetherell and Turner (1990).

For a discussion about identity politics, see Aronowitz (1992) and Zaretsky (1995); see as-Sa'dāwī (1997) and Ziauddin (1998) for a critique of identity politics.

For a discussion about culture, identity, and subjectivity taking into account neo-colonial globalization of Western capitalism and its colonial past, see Bhabha (1984, 1990, 1994, 1996), Featherstone (1995), Featherstone *et al.* (1995), Friedman (1994), and Fõrnas (1995).

2

For more on biological determinist theories, see Wilson (1975 and 1978).

For more on cultural feminism and post-structuralism, see Alcoff (1988).

For more on socialist feminist theories, see Delphy (1984), Ebert (1995), Eisenstein (1979), Hartsock (1983), and Kuhn and Wolpe (1978).

3

See 'Abūl-Husn (1993 and 1994), Agence France-Presse (Feb. 7, 1997, Jan. 7, 1998), Daniszewski (1997), Rugh (1984), Sabbah (1984), Shaaban (1991), "Two Dead..." (1995),United Nations Declaration ..." (1994), United Press International (1997), and Youssef (1973).

4

See 'Abdel-Kader (1987), Hatem (1986a/c, 1987b, 1988), al-Hibrī (1997), Hoffman-Ladd (1987), Jayawardena (1986), Kandiyoti (1991b, 1997), Karmi (1993), Mayer (1997), Mernīssī (1987/1991a, 1996a/c), Moghadam (1993), an-Na'im (1990a/b, 1994b), Nawār (1995), Nelson (1976), Rugh (1984 and 1993), El-Sa'adāwī (1993 and 1997), Sonbol (1988), Stowasser (1987a/b), Waddy (1980), and Walther (1993).

5

See Geadah (1990 and 1996), Jenefsky (1991:214-215), Stowasser (1996:35), Venkatraman (1995), and Walther (1993).

6

See L. 'Ahmed (1982 and 1986), al-Hibrī (1982a and b), Geadah (1996), Mernīssī (1993a), and Walther (1993). See also End Note 17 in Chapter One.

7

See Mernīssī (1982, 1987, 1988, 1991, 1993a, 1993b) and Sonbol (1996).

8

In discussing the early women's movement in Egypt, Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke (1990:xviii) define the term "feminist" as

> ...one or more of the following: an awareness by women that as women they are systematically placed in a disadvantaged position; some forms of rejection of enforced behaviors and thought; and attempts to interpret their own experiences and then to improve

> their position or lives of women...to a more complex analysis of oppression, the liberation of women and various forms of activism.

Because most of the early Egyptian feminists were Christians and francophones, the terms "feminist" and "feminism" were taken from French. The term "feminist", however, was probably not officially used in Arabic until the formation of the Egyptian Feminist Union in 1923.

9

Distinctions between Muslim and Christian women who were involved in the women's rights movement in Egypt at that time will not be discussed. The Christians were a privileged minority in Egypt at that time, but they were distrusted and disliked by most Egyptians for many reasons, including their perceived closeness to the Europeans. Educated Egyptian Christians, most of whom were Copts, often spoke French and were illiterate in Arabic. Coptic Egyptians were also a very privileged group in Egypt, having significant control over finance and trade. For a historical account of this as well as references to current violence between Copts and Muslims in Egypt, see Azzam (1996), Farah (1986), Lamb (1998), El-Messīrī (1978), Rugh (1993), Schneider (1998), and Sonbol (1988). See Hatem (1989) for a discussion about similar dynamics between Christians and Muslims in Palestine historically.

10

While the distinction between *féminine* and *féministe* is clear in French, the language of the Egyptian elite this century, that is not the case with the Arabic word, *nisā'ī* ("feminine" or "feminist"). As Badran and Cooke (1990:xiv) point out, the exact meaning of *nisā'ī* is determined only by the context and content of the text.

11

The name *Nūn* was chosen after the ancient goddess of the universe (El-Sa'adāwī, 1997:44).

Chapter Three
Research Methodology

> Theory must remain at best hypothetical, at worst unreal and barren [unless we have detailed] case studies and surveys dealing with the experiences of selected groups of women.. Berenice Carroll (1976)

> An emerging postulate for feminist research is using a variety of methods in order to generate multifaceted information. Renate Klein (1986)

> The emphasis on diversity in approaches to knowledge must carry with it the responsibility for offering modes of integration of the results of such inquiries. Shulamit Reinharz (1988)

I. Research Paradigms

As discussed in Chapter One, this study is exploratory. Its aim is to provide insight into the factors involved in structuring gender identity and gender roles for women in Egypt. Given its complexity, the exploration of gender identity is a task requiring the utilization of a variety of research methodologies. Three complementary research paradigms inform this study: naturalistic, constructivist inquiry; critical modernism; and feminism.

A. Naturalistic, Constructivist Inquiry

The research is primarily qualitative, using naturalistic, constructivist inquiry for the actual process of collecting data from the women participants. As previously mentioned, this is an ethnographic cumulative case study of fifty-one Egyptian women living in Cairo who come from a broad range of social groups. Data were collected from the participants through extended and extensive interviews.[1]

The object of the study is not to test a theory or model but to gain greater understanding of how Egyptian women themselves make sense of their society, particularly how they conceptualize gender. Thus, the methodology allowed the respondents to present their own stories which are reported here as well as compared and contrasted "...to produce as informed and sophisticated a construction (or more likely, constructions) as possible" (Guba, 1990:26). Though this study does not seek to test or develop theory, ultimately, any theory which may emerge from this research process will be grounded theory, that is, theory which, according to Strauss and Corbin (1990:23), is

> ...inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents...[I]t is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.

In such cases, the research methodology "...uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon...[constituting] a theoretical formulation of the reality under investigation...[T]he concepts and relationships among them are not only generated but they are also provisionally tested" (Strauss, and Corbin, 1990:24). Thus, theories are not tested; rather, theory is built from the data.

I want to be clear here, however, that I did not set out to develop a theory from the data, because, in fact, I would not be in a position to know that until after I had begun the data collection. It was entirely possible that no theory would emerge from the data. The applicability of any theory to the phenomenon can be judged using the criteria of fit, understanding, generality, and control (Strauss, and Corbin, 1990:23).

This approach also falls within the hermeneutic tradition of phenomenology. It is concerned with developing relevant categories and the relationships amongst them as well as creating new categories or combining existing categories in new rather than in standard ways. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:49) The categories are constructed from the data, not preconceived and forced on the data. This is because there may well be discrepancies between the existing literature and the data collected during the research process. Although I may have expected certain outcomes, such as that there would probably be a big gap between what subjects would say about gender when asked about it abstractly and what they would say about their own personal feelings and activities, I consciously tried to retain an open mind to see what emerged from the interview process itself and the data collected. By using open-ended questioning techniques and refraining from comment even when asked my personal views, I tried consciously to bracket my own ideas during the interviews.

After thirty years as a member, through marriage, of an extended Egyptian family and a number of extended stays in Egypt, I believe that I was well prepared to do this type of research in Egypt. My familiarity with the culture, the country, and particularly with most of the individuals whom I interviewed, allowed me to appreciate the women's perspectives and "... the subtleties of meaning of data" (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:41). At the same time, the fact that I am not a native Egyptian meant that I could be sensitive to factors that the women themselves took for granted. My research was further reinforced by my academic and professional experience as a student and teacher in education, sociology, and women's studies in Canada, which has provided me with an understanding of feminism and the various theories about gender as well as about national socio-economic development in a global context. My specific interest lies with the influences of education, whether formal or not, on these processes at the levels of the individual, the nation-state, and internationally.

> Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and the capacity to separate the pertinent from that which isn't. All this is done in conceptual rather than concrete terms. It is theoretical sensitivity that allows one to develop a theory that is grounded, conceptually dense, and well integrated -- and to do this more quickly than if this sensitivity were lacking. (Strauss and Corbin, 1990:42)

Without belaboring a point, I wish to stress the importance I place on understanding the perspective of the women themselves. It is the interpretation of reality held by the subjects themselves which provides meaning to their perceptions, actions, and their understanding of alternative possibilities. This is especially crucial regarding the conceptualization of gender by by women in Egypt today. While this study might have used a variety of Western feminist and/or non-feminist theories to interpret images of women in the Egyptian media, that is, however, not my intention because I think it misses the point. By allowing the women themselves to explain their understanding of female roles, much more can be gained in terms of understanding their values, attitudes, and behavior as women in Egypt during the 1990's.

While this study, like any ethnographic research, may ultimately be the text of the author, not the participants, as asserted by Clifford Geertz (1988:144), I would like my research to be both the describer's descriptions and those of the described. As much as possible, this analysis tries to keep to the realities of the everyday world rather than the heady stratosphere of academic discourse.[2] This is particularly important for the study of women in the Middle East because of the huge volume of literature produced about Arab women by Westerners as well as by Arabs, as pointed out by Marnia Lazreg (1990). It is my intention that the content, language, and availability of the study be easily and widely accessible by the respondents and other women, not limited to academics.

The use of ethnographic texts today, as Clifford Geertz (1988:147) suggests

> ...will involve enabling conversation across societal lines -- of ethnicity, religion, class, gender, language, race -- that have grown progressively more nuanced, more immediate, and more irregular. The next necessary thing...is neither the construction of a universal Esperanto-like culture, the culture of airports and motor hotels, nor the invention of some vast technology of human management. It is to enlarge the possibility of intelligible discourse between people quite different from one another in interest, outlook, wealth, and power, and yet contained in a world where, tumbled as they are into endless connection, it is increasingly difficult to get out of each other's way.

In terms of how such ethnography can or should be conducted, I agree with Geertz (1988:147) that

> [t]here is, of course, no single answer to this question, nor can answers be given before the fact, before anthropological authors actually author them. *Ex ante* prescriptive criticism -- this is what you must do, that is what you must not -- is as absurd in anthropology as it is in any other intellectual enterprise not dogmatically based. Like poems and hypotheses, ethnographies can only be judged *ex post*, after someone has brought them into being.

Nevertheless, "...attempts to portray...[ethnography] as anything more than representation of one sort of life in the categories of another [is] impossible to defend" (Geertz, 1988:144). Difficulties in understanding and interacting in Egyptian culture are further complicated by the differences between oral and literate modes of logic and in the differences in expression, emphasis, and importance between my culture and theirs. This has been referred to above. (See Fiske and Hartley, 1978; and Gronbeck, Farrell, and Soukup, 1991)

B. Critical Social Science

Another aspect of the research methodology involves utilizing published and unpublished documents and data, information obtained from interviews with "insiders" and other informants, radio and other media presentations. It also utilized my own understanding of Egyptian society gained through participant observation as a member of an extended Egyptian family to present and interpret the respondents' views within the broader social context which takes into account structural aspects. Thus, the study is not limited to a symbolic interactionist account of the lives and views of the respondents, but looks at the observable as well as the subjective aspects of their lives.[3]

Although the primary focus of the study is to present the data provided by the fifty-one respondents regarding their conceptualization and operationalization of gender, and to a lesser extent national identity, the study goes beyond presenting and analyzing "...the social processes of construction, reconstruction, and elaboration...[of] conflict...[and] consensus" on the subjective, individual interpretation of everyday life level to a more structural description and explanation of the socially defined nature of everyday life in Egypt (Guba, 1990:78; 254). Thus, the values, norms, expectations, obligations, roles, and institutions which are the foundation of Egyptian life are also central to the identity of the respondents as individual Egyptian women. (Sacks, 1986:176, cited in Guba, 1990:254).

While phenomenology has addressed the phenomena which constitute the cohesive structure of society,[4] critical modernism provides a recognition and analysis of power and a macro-level perspective of the functioning of individuals and groups. The values, norms, expectations, obligations, roles, and institutions of Egyptian society are linked to social conditions and historical developments. It is an inherently transdisciplinary approach. This structuralist, critical modernist social science approach offers a very different epistemology and ontology than the naturalistic one.

In naturalistic research, ontology is multiple and relative, socially and experientially based, local and specific (Guba and Lincoln, 1974). So far, we have no model of knowledge which can bridge these multiple realities within a constructionist paradigm. In terms of epistemology, reality is subjective and exists only in the minds of the actors; reality can only be changed by changing people's minds (Guba, 1990:26;77). Critical modernism, however, is premised on a belief in an observable reality. It utilizes a subjectivist, interactive epistemology; knowledge is value-bound, interest-bound, and context-bound.

> [Reality]...is to be considered the socially informed patterns that impinge upon our daily life as unquestioned and seemingly natural boundaries; and at the same time, because these conditions are historically formed through human struggles, the patterns are dynamic and changing (Guba, 1990:56).

C. Feminism

Both Western and Egyptian feminist conceptualizations of female identity have been addressed in Chapter Two. Feminism is particularly important in this study because gender is a socially constructed concept central to patriarchal societies. Feminist scholarship has made a tremendous contribution to research methodology by recognizing this and developing various research designs and strategies to uncover the socially constructed nature of knowledge related to the subordination and oppression of women as a collectivity, its historical roots, its internal contradictions, and strategies for achieving possible alternatives. Feminism has created a revolution in social science in terms of asking what is worth knowing and who can know (Joyappa and Self, 1996). Thus, as a critical realist, I also utilize feminist scholarship and research methodologies in this study (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Fay, 1975, 1987).

In many aspects, this study is also feminist critical social science in that it explores the interrelationship between women and their family, as well as between women, the family and the political, economic, and other social structures which significantly define and shape not only individuals but the nature of their participation in society (Pateman, 1988; Weedon, 1987).

Individual identities, including gender and nationality, are created through social interactions with others which are shaped by the particular culture of a society. How an individual feels, thinks, and behaves is influenced by the beliefs, principles, norms, and practices which a particular culture encapsulates and which become the standard by which individuals deal with problems. (Suyukduvenci, 1996).

Individuals, however, are not mere puppets of social structures. They are actors with agency and the capacity to reflect upon and alter social norms. Their emotions, sensations, and thoughts constitute an inner world distinct from the outer world of society and which are often distinct from their own behavior. They may well experience an "ontological balancing act" in bringing roles set by society into equilibrium with their own subjective personal identities. This can, in fact, produce great cognitive dissonance for some individuals. It is this reality which provides a basis for transformation both at the level of the individual and at the societal level. Transformation is, thus, "...the business of ontology, not epistemology." (Suyukduvenci, 1996). Ultimately, how we conceptualize the world shapes not only what we believe is knowable, but what we believe are our alternatives, and, hence, our behavior.

There are many aspects of this study which define it as feminist: the research is woman-centered, the research questions are of central concern to women, both researcher and participants are women, the research strives to represent human diversity and give a voice to the marginalized, there is an underlying criticism of patriarchal research and literature about the subject matter, and the research has the potential to contribute to constructive social change (Joyappa and Self, 1996; Lather, 1986, 1988, and 1991; Merriam and Simpson, 1995; Reinharz, 1992).

There are, however, many feminisms and feminists do not all agree on whether there is an essential difference between males and females in terms of their human nature. One of the major debates within feminism, in fact, is whether gender is biologically based and essential for males and females or socially created and variable both historically and cross-culturally. This is addressed in the study on two levels: in terms of how the respondents themselves conceptualize gender and in terms of my own position, which is that human nature is partially innate yet extremely flexible, especially when subjected to great social influences.

The other debate within feminism which is relevant to this study is that of particularism versus universalism in terms of human and civil rights for women. Many Western feminists have come under criticism by feminists in non-Western countries for being ethnocentric and even neo-imperialist in that they speak in universalist terms for others without understanding the cultures and social conditions of the women about/for whom they speak. Such Western feminists are primarily upper-middle class, white, Anglo-Saxon or Jewish academics and many are lesbian. They are from the most privileged groups of Western societies. Such Western hegemonic feminist scholarship tends to be "color blind" and "class blind", ahistorical and decontextualized, missing some of the most important obstacles and issues faced by women from other social, ethnic, racial, and national groups. This tends to silence those who are already marginalized the most. (Collins, 1990; Ham-Garth, 1994; hooks, 1984; Kelly, 1985; Lazreg, 1990; Mohanty, 1990).

This study, however, includes both the particularistic viewpoint of the respondents and the particularistic aspects of their lives as women in Egypt today as well as the universalistic principles of women's human and civil rights and the denial of at least some of these rights by all patriarchal societies today.[5]

Critical feminist social science is frequently also an emancipatory project premised on the belief that social egalitarianism is better than social inequality because it is a necessary prerequisite for the self-actualization of individuals as human beings and for a humane society. The contradictions and injustices of existing societies are explored both from the perspective of the respondents and the researcher. According to this approach, ontologically, the task of the researcher is to raise the consciousness of the subjects' oppression through dialogue. The aim of critical feminist social science is to transform not only the minds of individuals, but the world itself (Fay, 1975 and 1987; Reinharz, 1992).

Consciousness-raising, however, was not an inherent part of the research design for this study for many reasons. Despite sharing the view that social egalitarianism is prerequisite to self-actualization, I did not impose my ideas and beliefs on the respondents. Neither did I seek to plant ideas in their minds. Indeed, I would have been rejected immediately had I tried to do this. Egyptian women are very wary of such imposition, especially from outsiders. Because respondents sometimes sought information about my own life and issues of concern to Canadian women, there were opportunities for transformation which respondents could respond to if they wished.

The reality, however, is that neither Egypt nor Canada offers women the choices and support for those choices which are deemed socially necessary, let alone for those which women want ideally. Indeed, many of the respondents were aware of some of the contradictions and injustices which women face in everyday life in the West and they did not view Western societies as offering any examples to emulate. At least in Egypt women really do derive social status and prestige for being mothers.[6]

Thus, while I and many of the respondents in the study believe that the world is unjust and in need of constructive transformation, most of the respondents who addressed this concern believed that they were bound by social and metaphysical constraints, particularly religious ones, which were impossible to change. Because most of the respondents firmly believed not only that gender is essential, but that women are innately subordinate to men and that this is the will of God, it would not have been possible to pursue an emancipatory project in this study even if that had been my aim. Indeed, it was not even possible to pursue a feminist consciousness-raising strategy since there is no social support for challenging patriarchy. Even those Egyptian feminists who understand and believe in the critical feminist emancipatory project are unable to use this language or even seek these goals in Egypt. With few audible critics and without a social movement in Egypt demanding equal (same) rights for men and women, there is no social basis upon which to launch a feminist emancipatory project (al-'Alī, 1997; Badran, 1994:206, cited in al-'Alī, 1997:181-182). Furthermore, "[t]he determination of futures is not reserved for particular elites and experts who claim a sacred knowledge", but the values, beliefs, and actions of all citizens in their everyday lives (Popkewitz, 1990, cited in Guba, 1990:243). Thus, it is clear that while I did not set out to test or impose any theories or paradigms on the data or influence my respondents, I have my own theoretical perspectives which have been clearly stated in this chapter and which underlie my own analysis of the data. Indeed, interpretation of data is always premised on theory. However, I have been very careful to identify and separate my views from those of the respondents.

II. The Research Experience

Field research for this study was conducted in Egypt between October 1993 and July 1994. During this nine month period, several aspects of research were conducted. Information about current affairs and national issues was gathered from local and international newspapers, journals, and conference articles in English and Arabic, as well as mission statements and program and/or project goals of various governmental and non-governmental international aid agencies. Library research and interviews with personnel at 'Ain Shams University, Alexandria University, al-'Arīsh University, al-'Azhar University, Bānī Suwayf University, Cairo University, al-Munufiyah University, Zagazig University, the American University in Cairo, United States Agency for International Development, Ford Foundation, International Population Council, Egyptian National Population Council, Adult Literacy and Basic Education Centre at Sirs al-Layyān, UNICEF, UNESCO, AMIDEAST, and the American Information Center; attendance at local and international conferences and symposia; attendance at classes, debates, and other functions at the American University in

Cairo and at Cairo University; participation in meetings of medical personnel at clinics, hospitals, and universities, and a field review of the largest U.S. foreign aid project in the world located in the Nile Delta also provided necessary background information both to refresh and update my knowledge of Egyptian society and to contextualize the comments of the respondents.

I also interviewed many Egyptian men and women in key positions within government ministries, government-managed organizations, public and private universities, public and private schools, Egyptian and international non-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies, key personnel at various Western embassies, relatives, friends, and neighbors. There was also somewhat of a snowball effect with many of the persons interviewed whom I knew personally recommending that I interview others who might be of direct help. Indeed, they were correct, and the network of new contacts proved helpful to the research. Information gained from these informants also contributed significantly to my store of background information.

While the various contacts and sources of information mentioned above were essential in providing up-to-date background information for the study, it was the fifty-one Egyptian women I interviewed who provided the primary data reported here. These fifty-one women constitute the respondents in this study. Detailed information including demographic data as well as information pertaining to conceptualization of gender and national identity was obtained from these women.

A. The Research Instruments

Research instruments were developed to elicit and record the data necessary to achieve the aims of this study. They were, therefore, designed to facilitate the interviewing process and to ensure that, at the very minimum, the general research questions posed earlier in this chapter could be answered. They were also designed to be flexible, consonant with the research design, in order to accommodate other possibilities that might emerge during the interview process. The research instruments were incorporated into a three-part interview schedule. (*See Appendix 3.*)

The first part of the interview schedule consisted of objective, closed questions that focussed on demographic variables. These variables included socio-economic status data of each woman, her family of origin, and, if applicable, her family of procreation. Basic questions about employment and occupation of the respondent and, where relevant, her husband, were also included in this part of the interview. This information is discussed later in this chapter and informed my interpretation of the qualitative data. Although the questions in this part of interview schedule were constructed prior to arriving in Egypt for the field work, they were refined and expanded during the first stage of interviewing. Similarly, many possible answers were anticipated and coded for prior to beginning the fieldwork; however, response categories which arose during the interview process were added.

The second part of the interview schedule was subjective and almost entirely open-ended. This part of the interview relied on a set of photographs of billboards and posters depicting women. (*See Appendices 1-2.*) The intent of using the pictures was not to see how the women were affected by advertising or whether they purchased the goods advertised. Rather, the pictures were used as a projective device to elicit respondents' beliefs, values, and attitudes about gender, including norms of gender identity and gender roles through their reactions to the depiction of women on the billboards.

There is a prolific Western feminist literature on the ideal beauty image for women as projected by the Western mass media, primarily in the U.S. Bordo (1993) and Wolf (1997), among other Western feminists, have linked the ideal beauty image for women as projected by Western mass media to the patriarchal nature of Western societies and explored the influence of these images on women's self-concept. There has been little comparable analysis of the Egyptian mass media.[7] Furthermore, this Western literature is not easily generalized to Egypt because the ideal beauty image itself is decidedly different, reflecting vast differences in social norms. Analyzing images of women in the mass media in Egypt and/or their effect on women's self-concept is not the central focus of this study; hence, comparison to mass media images of women in Western countries is not undertaken. Rather, billboard images of women were used in this study as a projective device to prompt respondents to talk about women, and thus, to elicit their views about gender in general. What emerged was detailed description of the ideal beauty image, appropriate character, behavior, attire, and social roles for women. Although it was not the explicit intention of this study, as the respondents' comments indicate, the respondents provided their own analysis of the depiction of women on billboards. They discussed at length the effect of those images on the conceptualization of women and women's roles as well as their effect on the treatment of women by both women and men.

In order to compile the photographs of billboards to use as a projective instrument, during the first three months of field work in Egypt, I roamed around most of the neighborhoods of greater Cairo taking photographs of every billboard[8] and poster I could find which depicted an image of a woman. The photographs of billboards and posters were developed in 5" x 7" size and numbered for identification purposes. During an additional two month period, I continued to take photographs of any new billboards portraying a woman which would then be incorporated into the study. I also looked for better specimens to replace photographs taken of rather faded and/or damaged billboards. In total, thirty-five photographs of different billboards and posters were used in the interviews.

Although the original intention was to focus only on educational billboards and posters, because the Egyptian government had virtually abandoned these media as a means of mass, informal education, I was forced to include commercial advertisements in the study. In fact, the only educational ads found were some family planning posters, left over from previous government campaigns. Therefore, the set of photographs used in this study consisted of the following types of ads: eleven ads for films, six for stage plays, five for singers, one for a belly dancer, ten for local products, one for a Western product (Coca Cola), and two photographs of four posters used in a government family planning campaign. Only the family planning posters were educational; the rest of the ads were commercial. The set of photographs used as a research instrument in this study, therefore, constituted all of the billboards and posters publicly displayed in the greater Cairo region during the first four months of the field work, from October through January 1994, which depicted any image of a woman.

Rather than asking the interviewees questions concerning the pictures, the thirty-five photographs were spread out on a table for respondents to view and the respondents' spontaneous comments about these photographs were recorded. To ensure that the respondents had covered the points which seemed important to the research, some open-ended questions were included in this second part of the interview schedule. For example, I would ask the respondent to comment about any photographs which she had not addressed. If a respondent had commented only about the personal life of the person depicted on the billboard, I would ask her what she thinks about the actual image of the woman on the billboard and whether or not she approves of the image, rather than the person *per se*. These questions, which provided for some minimal common ground in the women's responses, were asked only if the respondent had not addressed them spontaneously. There were no predetermined codes for this part of the interview schedule, though patterns could later be ascertained from going through all of the respondents' comments and common themes identified. Although some preliminary theme analysis was done during the field work, the bulk of this was accomplished later in Canada.

The third part of the interview schedule consisted of some eighteen open-ended questions probing each respondent's conceptualization of gender. The purpose of these questions was to make sure that there was some commonality of focus to the content of the qualitative data and to make sure that the broadest aspects of gender were captured in the data provided by all respondents. Some of these questions were only posed if the respondent did not spontaneously discuss them during the preceding phase of the interview. The general topic of each question was provided to the woman and she was asked to give her opinion as broadly and completely as possible. For example, if the respondent had not said much about the differences in responsibilities and rights between men and women (based on gender), I might ask, "Tell me about the responsibilities and rights of men and women," or "Tell me what you think about the right to divorce," or "Tell me what you think about child custody rights," etc. At times, specific questions listed in the third part of the interview schedule were asked. Many of the possible answers were anticipated and coded in advance; however, it became apparent during the interview process that a significant number of other answers given by respondents would have to be added to the questionnaire and coded. Some questions, for instance, had more than forty different answers. It is important to point out that the data, particularly that collected in response to the pictures and the open-ended questions, were then integrated as a seamless whole for presentation in this dissertation.

B. The Respondents

Before travelling to Egypt for the field work, I made a list of all the Egyptian women living in the greater Cairo area whom I knew, categorized by neighborhood of residence. Upon arrival in Cairo, I contacted all of them to inform them about my intended research and to ask them if they would consider being a participant. It was not difficult to contact those women who could be easily reached by telephone and/or who spoke English. Relatives and friends were drafted to contact women who did not speak English to explain my intentions. Personal visits were the only way to reach people with no telephone, with the exception of some people whose neighbors had a telephone and were willing to let them answer my calls.

Initially, effort was put into identifying and interviewing participants who spoke English and were relatively accessible for interviews in order to test the questionnaire and interview strategies. This made it much easier to conduct the remaining interviews, particularly those conducted in Arabic with the aid of a translator. Thus, the first six months of the field work was taken up interviewing English-speaking respondents, finalizing the set of photographs of billboards depicting images of women, adjusting the code book and interview strategies to reflect the realities of the interviews. However, very few interviews were actually completed. Because of the many interruptions and the length of the interviews, time which was not utilized interviewing respondents was spent doing other aspects of the research referred to above. Furthermore, because of the difficulties encountered scheduling and completing interviews, the selection of the final sample was not as orderly and as efficient as I had intended.

Although the intention was to interview approximately 25 literate women and 25 illiterate or semi-literate women, I was prepared to expand or otherwise adjust the sample if I found that there were some gaps or contradictory patterns emerging from the interviews. In the end, due primarily to difficulties of completing interviews, only six interviews with respondents having primary education or less were completed. Thus, my final sample consisted of sixteen women with no post-secondary education and thirty-five with at least some post-secondary education.

C. Data Collection

Although I have a degree in classical Arabic, I did not have an adequate command of colloquial Arabic to conduct an interview entirely in Arabic. Thus, I was assisted by a translator when the respondent could not speak any English. The main translator was a well known and trusted adult. Sometimes, however, teenaged relatives of the respondents who spoke good English volunteered to translate and this turned out to be a very satisfactory arrangement for those interviews.

Collection of the data for this study involved a great deal of organization even when a translator was not needed. I used a list of respondents and potential respondents categorized by neighborhood to keep track of which women I had interviewed and whether or not the interview was completed. Every day, I consulted this list and tried to make sure that I was getting a variety of women in terms of socio-economic class and education as well as neighborhoods of residence.

Initially, the respondents interviewed were women whom I know personally and feel comfortable with. As they speak English and are well educated, language and communication in general was not a problem. Interviewing a few of them enabled me to identify some of the shortcomings of the interviews and make appropriate adjustments to the form and content of the process. This served as a sort of initial sounding board for me. Nevertheless, as is usual in this type of research, further adjustments to the questions and interview protocol were be made throughout the interviewing process in order to capture and reflect the emerging properties of the interviews.

The second step of the data collection involved speaking with middle, upper-middle, and upper class people whom I did not know personally nor through my family. They were contacted through neighbors and work associates of the first and third groups of participants. In fact, some of them sought me out because they knew someone I had interviewed and they were curious about my research. A few happened to be visiting a respondent while I was conducting an interview and insisted on being interviewed as well. Most of these interviews were also conducted in English, but a few required help from a translator.

My original intention was to interview the women working as domestic servants before I interviewed their employers because of a concern that employers would try to influence what their employees said.[9] If employers were concerned that what the servant said might reflect on them as well, then the responses from the servants would be of questionable validity if the employer knew, not necessarily what would be asked in the interview, but even the topic in general. My concern was borne out when one of the most well-intentioned women insisted that her servant present ideas and opinions to me which she (the employer) approved of. The employer did not know that I had already interviewed her servant when she made these remarks. Although a few of the interviews with women who did not speak English were conducted in the early stages of the data collection, most of the interviews requiring a translator, including those with domestic servants, were left for later as I tried to complete the interviews already started in English. Despite this change in plan, I did interview the domestic servants prior to interviewing their employers.

Thus, it was not until late in the field work that I was able to adequately interview lower and lower-middle class women, even though they were well known to me. This is the major reason why the number of women in these categories is so low compared to the number of women who have some post-secondary education. In hindsight, I regret both not having more women in my sample who are very poor illiterates and more well-educated upper-middle class women who hold key government positions, work for international agencies, and are self-employed. Time constraints and difficulty of access resulted in my having fewer interviews completed with this latter group of women. Nevertheless, women interviewed, though not statistically representative, do represent the whole range of women in Cairo from the poorest and least educated to the most affluent and educated. The ideas they expressed reflect a broad spectrum of views about and conceptualizations of gender, though the frequency with which those views occur in Cairo or Egypt could only be determined by interviewing a random sample of all Cairene or all Egyptian women.

C1. Scheduling and Length of Interviews

The interviews varied in length from two hours to twelve hours per respondent; however, the average interview took three to six hours to complete. Interview length varied with the number of interruptions and the respondent's understanding of or interest in the research. For example, a two hour interview was possible because the respondent had a master's degree in the social sciences and she clearly understood the nature of the research. She quickly organized and classified the photographs of images of women on billboards and made analytical comments without being probed. Some respondents gave lengthy comments about the images because they were very knowledgeable about the media and/or the entertainers and wished to share their knowledge. Some also wanted to make sure that I understood Egyptian cultural norms and their interpretation of Islam; in fact, much of the interchange between the these respondents and myself was their explaining the Egyptian woman's point of view on some of the materials and issues and what is acceptable or unacceptable for Muslims. Some interviews, regardless of the number of hours I spent with the respondent in one sitting, were interrupted so frequently that I had to encourage them to complete the interviews at my residence or some other location in order to avoid the interruptions.

The sheer volume of information obtained meant that interviews could not be completed in one sitting, even in the rare occasions when there were no interruptions. Because of rescheduling difficulties, most interviews were interrupted with partial interviews of other women. Thus, I would have many unfinished interviews on my list at any one time. This presented difficulties for the respondents because they would be unsure what was left to discuss, and it was difficult for me because I had to keep track of not only who had been interviewed, but which interviews were complete and what sections of interviews were still incomplete.

Once the interviewing began, I telephoned women to schedule interviews and started each day with telephone calls to confirm appointments made for that day. Often, no one would answer the telephone or the woman would say that it was no longer convenient to keep the appointment that day. Some women would be willing to reschedule appointments, while others preferred to have me call in the morning of the day I wished to conduct the interview to see if it was convenient.

I kept track of the women who were interviewed in any one neighborhood and made sure that I was contacting women in neighborhoods where interviews had not been initiated in order to include women from as many different types of neighborhoods as possible. Given the difficulties of transportation in Cairo, I usually planned my interview schedule so that I would spend the entire day and evening in one particular neighborhood or part of the city.

Even so, the number of women whom I could interview at the women's residences in one day was limited because interviews had to fit into the daily regime of the women. For example, mealtimes or household obligations limited the time available for interviews. Most socializing occurs around food and I was often invited to stay, yet it is difficult and sometimes impossible to conduct the interview with members of the nuclear, and often extended, family present.[10]

If the woman was employed in the public sector, work hours generally are from 9:30 am to 1 or 2 pm. Difficulties involved in trying to reach women at work by telephone are discussed below. Generally, it was not possible to reach women at work and very difficult to interview them there.[11] A great deal of time and effort was spent scheduling interviews as well as determining which interviews had been completed.

C2. The Interview Settings

Of the fifty-one respondents, twenty-eight (54.9%) were interviewed in their own residences (22 households), five (9.8%) at their workplaces, three (5.9%) at the American University in Cairo on the campus or in my office, five at my residence in Cairo, two at the residence of a mutual friend, two (3.9%) at the residence of a relative, and two at a private country club. In addition, four (7.8%) women were interviewed in more than one place.[12]

Conducting the interview at my residence when the respondent was alone proved to be the best option because there were usually no interruptions and the woman was more relaxed if it was only the two of us in the residence. However, due to the problems referred to below regarding the inappropriateness of a woman living alone in Egypt as well as transportation and communication problems, it was extremely difficult to conduct the interviews in my residence.

In fact, only one woman was interviewed in my residence prior to the arrival of my husband. She was single, lived near me, had her own car, worked full-time at a government office completely inaccessible to me, still lived at home with her parents and unmarried brother, was a distant relative, and, in short, it was better for her to have the interview at my residence than anywhere else. The other four women who were interviewed exclusively at my residence were all illiterate, and these interviews occurred after my husband's arrival and only with his direct intervention. Three other women, who had been initially interviewed at their residences and one at her employer's residence, were later interviewed at my residence because it had proven difficult to complete the interviews in the original settings due to numerous interruptions.

Interviewing women in their workplace proved to be equally difficult. Since most respondents did not have their own office space, there was no privacy, making it difficult to conduct the interview. Even those high-ranking bureaucrats who did have their own office would have security guards and/or low level workers in the same office space who were always available to run errands. Another difficulty was the inevitable interruptions from work-related duties that either delayed the start of the interview and/or made it difficult to focus on the interview. A third problem posed by trying to interview respondents in the workplace is that many workplaces are virtually inaccessible to non-employees. In many cases, although I had made special arrangements to enter the grounds for a scheduled interview, security staff denied me entrance. Thus, a combination of these factors meant that some women's interviews were never completed and hence were not included in the sample of fifty-one respondents. This was a major disappointment and loss to the study since these women hold key positions in Egyptian government ministries, universities, and international aid agencies. Nevertheless, four such women were finally interviewed at work.

If missing information was easy to obtain by telephone, respondents were contacted by telephone to complete the interview, to confirm information previously given, and/or to clarify answers. Thus, telephone interviewing was used in addition to the face-to-face interviews, but never in place of them. This saved a great deal of time for both the respondent and myself. Although using the telephone saved me a great deal of time and effort trying to overcome the myriad of difficulties faced traversing the city, it was still not a simple matter of picking up the telephone and being connected, as discussed below.

Finally, I met many of the respondents at various social gatherings which were not part of the formal interviewing process, but which often proved useful to verify details or record details which had been overlooked in the formal interview. This was done inconspicuously as part of the general socializing.

C3. The Interview

The actual interview, though it varied greatly amongst respondents, always began the same way. First of all, the nature of the study and its rationale were explained to each respondent. The respondent was then told that there was a standard interview schedule, including a set of photographs, which would be followed for each respondent interviewed, and that each respondent's comments would be recorded directly into the interview schedule, labelled with her own case identification number. All interview information was to be stored in computer files by the case identification numbers to prevent any identification of the respondents. In order to protect their identity, all descriptions of any individual respondent in this study have been done in such a way as to prevent their identification.

As I anticipated, the respondents were sometimes dubious about these assurances because Egyptians are used to being surveyed and monitored by the government and/or government-backed agencies (al-'Alī, 1997; Zākī, 1995). This, combined with the fact that Egyptians have a long history of being exploited by the government means that they distrust people who ask questions, particularly personal ones, and are suspicious of what uses the information will be put (Singerman, 1994). Furthermore, Egyptians do not freely discuss personal views, particularly relating to the family, and especially so with outsiders. I had an advantage with many of my respondents because I already knew much about their personal lives and views through our previous association and I had discussed similar topics with them in the past.

Even if these individuals did not understand fully why I was seeking the information, they were not as reticent as strangers would be to answer my questions fully and truthfully (Reinharz, 1992:65; Rugh, 1986:viii-ix).

Depending on the respondent, this discussion about the dissertation research could be as short as five minutes or as long as several hours over several sittings. Some respondents were more interested in questioning the purpose of the research than others. Once this was explained, respondents were asked to sign informed consent forms. Those respondents who understand English were asked to sign the English version, though many of them also read the Arabic version to make sure they were the same and that they understood it. Those respondents who did not understand English were asked to sign the Arabic version of the consent form. Those respondents who were illiterate either signed an "X" or had a close relative sign their name for them after having the consent form read to them in Arabic.

I informed all of the respondents that I would be in Egypt until the end of June 1994, so they could visit and/or telephone me to inquire about the progress of my work and that they could read their own transcripts. If they had any additions and/or changes to make, they could do so. They were also informed at the beginning that they could choose to withdraw from the study at any time, in which case their transcript would be destroyed. Only one woman said she would be interested in receiving a copy of her transcript.

Since my interview schedule consisted of both closed, and open-ended questions, the interviews were not rigidly structured. If there was less than two hours available for the initial interview, or if there would likely be many interruptions, I obtained as much of the demographic information as possible. That maximized the amount of information I obtained, provided the respondent with a sense of having accomplished something, and minimized the stress we both experienced. Sometimes it was possible just to go down the list of questions in the first part of the interview schedule and record the woman's answers. Sometimes it was not possible to be so direct, but to ask the woman to speak about her education and the background of her parents. As the salient facts would come out in the response, I would record the demographic information.

Each respondent was given a case identification number and the interview schedule remained intact with all of the respondent's answers and comments. Thus, each respondent's interview data was saved in a separate file, labelled by case identification number. The demographic and descriptive information about the woman was typed into my laptop computer as the respondent spoke. As the respondents discussed their views about the images of women on billboards, they were documented in the same manner. If clarification was required, I read what I had entered and/or the woman repeated what she said for verification. Although I sometimes found it taxing to keep up with the women by typing their answers *verbatim*, doing so saved me a great deal of transcription time. Many of the respondents were not familiar with laptop computers and were very curious about it. They were also amazed that I could type fast enough to accurately capture their words. Some of them liked to look at the screen and read what they had said. In addition to typing what the women said as they were interviewed, notes were made regarding their body language and other aspects of non-verbal communication which might be important in interpreting their verbal responses. The tone and other aspects of voice and personality responses were also noted.

Some respondents, however, were somewhat sceptical about why demographic information was required and wanted to know what other questions I would ask. In such cases, the respondent was first asked to view the photographs of billboard ads depicting women. In all cases, whatever the order of the interview, each interviewee was asked to think about whether she had seen any of the billboards or posters in the streets, and what her responses to them were. These open-ended questions were designed to solicit the broadest range of responses possible and not to limit them by providing any pre-set categories. The respondents' comments were usually directed at a particular photograph and so comments were recorded by photograph identification number within the interview schedule which was itself identified by the case identification number of the respondent. As a participant explained her responses to the images of women presented, her interpretations of and feelings about the images were recorded. So as not to influence the interpretations given by the respondents, questioning in this part of the interview was very limited and any directive questions I had were asked after the respondent's own view was given. If they had not already done so, all respondents were asked to explain what these images of women in billboard ads meant to them, what they believed the message of the ad to be, how they evaluated the effectiveness of the ad in projecting the message, and what their over-all feelings were about the images of women portrayed at the end of this portion of the interview. If they expressed any dissatisfaction with some of the images, they were asked to explain their reasons as well as to offer an alternative depiction which they might prefer. Again, this was done with the least possible amount of direction on my part.

If the women were overwhelmed by the number of photographs, I would ask them to group the pictures and then to view them group by group to make the task more manageable. Some respondents grouped the photographs by type of ad. For instance, photographs were often grouped as ads for singers, movies, stage plays, commercial products, and family planning. Many respondents chose to group the photographs in terms of images they liked, those they disliked, and those which they were indifferent about. Sometimes, this would also mean that the groups consisted of photographs of personalities known and liked by the woman, persons unknown to the woman, and personalities known but disliked by the woman. Once the grouping was accomplished, time would set the limit regarding how many groups of photographs the woman would have time to comment on during that particular session. In order to get the woman's opinion on each photograph, I would ask her to comment briefly about each one in a particular group and then ask her to comment more broadly about the group as a whole.

Sometimes, a respondent would ask me what I thought about the photographs and I would defer my opinion until after it seemed that she had exhausted hers. Sometimes, the woman would also ask what other respondents had said about the photographs, and, again, I would not respond until she had provided her own opinions. Nevertheless, it was sometimes productive to discuss, in the most general way, my opinions and those of other respondents because it would serve to allay any fears the woman had about being critical as well as being too enthusiastic about any of the photographs.

In Egypt, it is considered very dangerous to be envious because it is thought to attract the "evil eye" which will steal away the object of your envy and/or cause some other harm to you. Admiring something, especially if it belongs to someone else, is not done in because it results in the person being obliged to give it to you in order to avoid the "evil eye". Likewise, being critical is not socially acceptable and is expected to result in retribution. Thus, if a woman was particularly reluctant to say anything strongly negative or positive about a photograph but her body language indicated strong feelings, I would comment that some women really disliked or even hated this image and/or that other women really liked this image. That often encouraged them to be more completely open and honest about their reaction to the image. If the image was something unacceptable in Islam, that would also make it easier for the woman to say that she disliked it without feeling anxious.

Some of the respondents would be so excited about conveying their feelings about the photographs that they would show me ads in women's magazines which they had in their homes. Since the bulk of the interviewing was done during the spring, the preferred wedding season, many of them had bridal magazines to show me. Because using magazine ads as a research instrument was not part of the research design and because of the fact that the interview schedule I had was already too time-consuming, I did not incorporate these magazine ads into the study. They did, however, sometimes facilitate the amount and type of information women were willing to provide about the photographs and made a good bridge for discussing gender and national identity in general. I did not, however, take magazines with me to interviews nor did I initiate any mention about magazine ads.

Prior to conducting the field work, it was anticipated that certain themes related to gender would arise from the interviews and participant observation. The themes included the gender-based social roles of men and women, personality traits and behavior patterns deemed appropriate for women versus men, and the communication patterns deemed appropriate for women versus men. Within each of these themes, unequal power was anticipated to be a major factor influencing relationships between persons of different sexes, classes, generations, religions, ethnic groups, and regions. These themes helped to conceptualize and organize the research process and methodology prior to the actual data collection. Although I anticipated that these themes might emerge from the interviews, there was no intention to impose them. The anticipated themes did, in fact, emerge naturally during many of the interviews. Since it became apparent early in the interviewing process that the respondents' comments addressed the anticipated themes, I probed respondents who did not mention these themes.

The emphasis during the interviewing and data collection was on recording and understanding the women's interpretations of the images of women presented to them as well as their general understanding of gender and their own gender identity construct. Concepts of national identity, though not included in the initial research design, emerged during the interviews and seemed to be an important element of gender conceptualization for the respondents. Therefore, national identity also became a salient aspect of gender identity and is discussed in the presentation of the data in chapters four through seven.

Once comments about the pictures were organized by respondent and picture, they were printed. By comparing the results of interviews, I looked for patterns from which to further develop themes for coding and analysis. Then I would begin the interviewing process again. It became much easier to see the patterns and themes both across the respondents and across the photographs as more and more interviews were completed. Thus, the analysis could proceed once the data description was completed. The themes used for the analysis are those which come from the actual data collected. Some data coding was done during the interview itself; however, some data had to be coded later, as did the analyses of comments about the billboard images of women and the identification of themes arising from them. Some coding was completed after the first several interviews, to see what, in fact, was emerging, and what changes needed to be made to the interview format and process.

D. Operational Difficulties

There were a variety of operational difficulties encountered in carrying out this research. They are, however, not unique to this particular project, but are related to doing research in general in Egypt. Some of these difficulties would be encountered in most underdeveloped countries. The particular operational difficulties I experienced conducting this research in Egypt fall under the following categories: public service difficulties; bureaucracy and security concerns; and problems encountered by a lone woman.

D1. Public Service

Over the last twenty years, the entire infrastructure of Cairo has been subject to modernization. This means that the water, sewer, electric, and telephone lines were being replaced, as well, natural gas lines laid throughout the city, involving several governments and contractors. Roads were dug up all over the city, often completely blocking off entire neighborhoods to vehicular traffic for months. Thus, utilities were constantly being broken or blacked out. Power outages and overworked telephone exchanges presented serious obstacles to doing efficient research. Frequent and lengthy periods with no water supply frustrated residents and consumed considerable effort to cope. (Sonbol, 1988)

A related problem is that of communication. This problem became apparent during the preparatory work before arriving in Egypt. Two years before the start of field work, letters were sent to a variety of individuals informing them of my intended research project and soliciting information which might be of help. These individuals included Egyptians and foreigners living in Egypt, Egyptians living outside Egypt, and many individuals of numerous nationalities who have conducted research in Egypt or are otherwise knowledgeable about Egyptian society. Some were well known to me, some were not. Although some individuals did reply with suggestions and feedback as well as providing names of others, many who were contacted did not. This limited response, though frustrating, is not unusual for a variety of reasons. In addition to those who simply did not respond, the vicissitudes of the Egyptian mail system mean that letters are not always delivered to the addressee. This necessitated telephoning numerous persons to obtain the necessary information, a process which proved time-consuming and expensive. In the end, I received some good information and made new contacts, most of whom were extremely helpful both before I arrived in Egypt to do the field work and after.

One crucial piece of information that would have been very helpful but was not given before my arrival in Egypt is that the government had virtually abandoned the use of billboards as a means of educating the masses. Thus, I had to make use of private, commercial billboards and change the focus of the research itself.

Reaching people by telephone also often proved to be difficult. First of all, there are very few public telephones; most do not work, and those that do have long queues. Egyptian government telephone stations and some private companies in five star hotel lobbies provide "public" telephone and fax service for local or long distance calls, but there is often a long queue at these places.[13] Placing calls to arrange or confirm interviews was therefore difficult, especially when I was away from home between interviews and needed to rely on public telephones. In addition, while some telephone exchanges have been modernized with the most up-to-date fiberoptic underground cables, modern switching equipment and seven digit telephone numbers, many of the telephone exchanges still used five digits, had antique switching equipment and old lines, and worked only some of the time.

Transportation in Cairo is slow and dangerous. It is actually faster to walk in some parts of the city than to be in a vehicle. Infrastructure repairs that block roads and the burgeoning population meant that traffic jams were common; vehicles do not remain on their own side of the street; and irritated drivers frequently blast their horns. Finally, due to abject poverty, it was becoming more dangerous for a lone woman to take a taxi or even a micro bus as she may be cheated, robbed and/or sexually attacked, as reported by many respondents and the news media (Sonbol, 1988). The safest, though crowded, forms of public transportation were buses and commuter trains. Sexual harassment, however, is common.[14] Besides the taking the train, I walked to most of my destinations.

The disruptions of public utilities, heavy traffic and the density of population combined to make life difficult for Egyptians and foreign researchers alike. Pollution often chokes the air; water, when available, may not be potable; public lavatories either do not exist or were unusable; maintaining personal hygiene is difficult for many and impossible for some. All combined to affect public health (Korayem, 1987; World Bank, 1991:27).

D2. Bureaucracy and Security

Another major obstacle to doing research in Egypt is a Kafka-type bureaucracy common to government, university, and other public offices; Western Embassies; non-governmental organizations; and United Nations agencies. Terrorist acts by Islamic fundamentalists heightened the obstacles presented by these bureaucracies, resulting in limited physical access, convoluted processes for obtaining information and documentation, excessive secrecy and suspicion surrounding the releasing of even innocuous information; great difficulty in obtaining written documentation; and irritating rules and procedures such as sequestering passports and other personal identification documents, and forbidding cameras, tape recorders, camcorders, etc., into buildings or compounds. Roads and access to particular buildings were frequently barricaded off for security reasons and pedestrians were forced to retreat and find another route to their destination. This worsened traffic jams.

Because cameras are forbidden inside most government buildings and Western embassies it was difficult to use a camera and conduct any business on the same day. Taking photographs was also prohibited in many places throughout Cairo and the countryside. Egyptian authorities cited military installations and security reasons for this. Often, however, there was no apparent reason for this restriction. This, along with the difficulty of transportation, meant that it took a full three months before I was satisfied that I had found and photographed all the images of women depicted on billboards in the Cairo area.

D3. The Woman Alone

Finally, probably one of the biggest operational difficulties I faced in Egypt was not being taken seriously as a person just because I am a female. As a woman whose husband and children were in Canada, I was treated with suspicion. Egyptian women are not allowed to leave their household, let alone the country, without the explicit permission of their father or husband (Afshar, 1991:11; al-Nowaihi, 1979). Even my husband's relatives and my long-term friends could not understand why I would want to leave my husband for such a long time nor why he would give me permission to do so. On more than one occasion, Egyptian government officials demanded that, in lieu of my husband, my brother-in-law come and account for my presence in a government office where I was seeking information because they did not want to talk to me as a woman solo.[15]

A woman without a live-in male to protect her is by default a "bad" woman, and is generally treated as a prostitute (*sharmūṭah*). This is the "green light" for men to regard a woman as fair game for sexual advances and outright harassment. Even some men whom I knew very well and who volunteered to help me with my research engaged in such harassment.[16] Like other women, I was expected to live with close relatives in their household. The restrictions of such a living arrangement would, however, have limited my ability to carry out research. Respondents sometimes had difficulty understanding why I would live alone in my own residence and respondents were reluctant to visit me there. Much to my frustration, until the arrival of my husband, even the legitimacy of my research and my ability to conduct it was impeded by my being alone.

III. Methodological Issues

Biases of the researcher are impossible to avoid and are best made explicit at the outset. They include a plethora of predispositions stemming from the researcher's personality, cultural and socio-economic background, stage in the life cycle and life experiences, intellectual training, philosophical and ethical values, political commitments, etc. These, along with predominant paradigms in academia and global socio-economic influences, are some of the main factors which contribute to the way the researcher designs and conducts the research.

Given the biases of class, religion, ethnicity-race, nationality, and world region which reflect the international stratification of people and the global power struggles amongst elites and states, it is also necessary to address the issue of my being a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant Westerner whose research focusses on Egyptian women and Egyptian society. As in all aspects of social science research, researcher bias is unavoidable. Everyone has biases which are integral to her/his identity. Unfortunately, researchers are sometimes affected by ideological imperatives which blind them to alternative views of the subjects studied. While it is outside the scope of this study to provide a review, let alone a critique, of "Orientalism" and "post-Orientalism", some of the issues forming the core of this debate are addressed here.

The first is the issue of power inequality between Westerners and Middle Easterners, reflected in perceived power inequality between researcher and subjects studied, and includes the ability/propensity of Western researchers to impose their values and ideas on those they study as well as conceptualizing the subjects and their society as inferior and backward. Ironically, Egyptian researchers have also done this (Hussain, Olson, and Qureshi, 1984). A related issue is the simplistic representation of Islam as monolithic and static. Western writers and researchers have also been criticised for idealizing Christianity and demonizing Islam. Finally, the class bias of a researcher may also distort the picture presented of people from another class. Indeed, both Egyptians and Westerners have distorted and even obscured the problems and struggles of Egyptian women because of their *bourgeois* and/or nationalist orientation.

Theorizing about gender often reflects the interests and circumstances of women in developed Western societies; however, Muslim feminists in the West and elsewhere have developed alternative theories about gender. Nevertheless, I have chosen not to premise this study on particular theory(ies) of gender. Because this study focuses on the views of the respondents themselves, it is not theory-driven. The data arising from the interviews provide the basis for theorizing about gender in Egypt. While there are some similarities amongst respondents, there are also some significant differences in their views, indicating the complexity of the problem of gender.

A second element in my attempt to avoid the Orientalist bias is the use of billboard images of women collected in Egypt. Rather than asking those I interviewed directive questions about how they viewed women, their role and identity, and in so doing affect the responses, pictures that respondents would see every day in their own society were used with the least possible direction as to response. The women interviewed were simply asked to tell me about the pictures and the women in them.

Finally, I have presented the different views of the respondents in their own words as well as presenting these different views in my own analysis. I have tried neither to judge nor evaluate Islam or Christianity as they are practiced nor as they "should" be practiced. In reporting the words of subjects from all social classes and groups, I have attempted to avoid my personal and societal biases in describing the status, rights, and roles of these women in Egyptian society. In addition, by reporting the different reactions I experienced from respondents and others to my interviewing women from all social classes and groups, I reveal their views and their behavior, even though I might disagree with them. This also enabled me to avoid the problem of objectifying the respondents, since their voices are presented in their own words and the differences amongst them are revealed both from their own points of view and my own. Rather than presenting a theoretically unified view, I have tried to accurately present the voices of all the respondents. Clearly, there is great diversity and disagreement amongst them. My own views, when expressed, are identified as my own.

In conclusion, the most important point about the "Orientalist vs post-Orientalist" debate is that it misses the point: the problems of people in everyday life are obscured or ignored. My motivation for conducting this research and writing this dissertation was, in fact, to reveal the life of ordinary Egyptian women in greater Cairo. Although the respondents discussed many problems facing them in their everyday life, neither I nor the respondents believe that any other society offers a better alternative. Even those respondents who are infatuated with the West complained about the problems facing women in the West, and said that problems such as prostitution, pornography, and rape which are endemic in the West are rare in Egypt. Thus, I am not presenting Canada or any other society as superior to Egypt. The criticisms of Egyptian society made by respondents and/or myself do not imply the existence of a superior alternative. In fact, I make it clear that most societies today are patriarchal, and hence, women are at a disadvantage vis-à-vis men everywhere. My own position as a critical realist and a socialist feminist means that I am not an apologist for any type of inequality. Hierarchy, inequality, exploitation, domination, and oppression are integral to both capitalism and patriarchy, and hence, characterize relations amongst people as well as states globally. This analysis lays bare the forces impinging on women, including Egyptians, and underlies my interpretation of this study. Thus, rather than arguing about who or what is more "politically correct", I prefer to focus on problems of people in everyday life and address the origins of these problems. This cannot be accomplished without being critical of both Egyptian and Western societies.[17]

In addition to the problems identified in the "Orientalist" critique and the operational problems discussed above, some problems encountered in conducting this research are inherent to the methodology used. These are problems any researcher would encounter using these research methodologies in any setting. Methodological problems related to the lengthiness of the interviews; the interview settings; the need for rapport with the participants; and concerns about confidentiality and security have already been discussed. In addition, other methodological issues such as the problems of respondents' understanding of the research; researcher and respondent bias; reliability; replicability and generalizability must also be addressed.

A. Respondents' Understanding of the Research

Because many of the women had difficulty comprehending what I was trying to do and why, this led to concerns on my part about obtaining informed consent.[18] Those respondents who were illiterate and even those with less than post-secondary education presented the greatest challenge in terms of explaining the study. Thus, the respondents with no higher education generally focussed on asking why I was interested in collecting information, and particularly why I was interested in their personal opinions about the images of women depicted in the billboard ads. Like many better-educated respondents, they also did not understand why Canadians would be interested in the opinions of Egyptian women.

Although a number of the women interviewed had post-graduate degrees, their specialization was in agriculture, science, and medicine so their understanding of research was quite different from what they were being asked to do in this study. Participant observation and open-ended interviews in which respondents' personal opinions were expressed did not constitute "scientific" research in their minds. Their education and experience was limited to quantitative methodologies and positivistic methods and they were unaware of other paradigms of research and knowledge.[19] Women with bachelor degrees in engineering, humanities and law were equally baffled about social science research. Even those in social work had not done qualitative research. This necessitated lengthy explanations of the research even before interviews could begin.

The difficulty that respondents had in understanding what I was doing and why was also evident when I asked respondents to give their own personal opinion about images of women in photographs of billboards. Inevitably, I would be asked, "Is this a test?" and/or "What's the correct answer?" They did not want to get a "low score" on the "test"! When I tried to assure them that the whole point was to get their true opinions, they would wonder why and "who cares?" Some asked if I was collecting information for some Egyptian-based project because they really could not understand Canadians being interested in their views.

B. Influence of the Researcher on Respondents and the Study

As a researcher interested in the social construction of concepts such as gender, I am very aware of my own values and biases. As noted above, in the design of the study and in the data collection, I tried to self-consciously bracket my biases. I also consulted with many respondents and other informants about possible interpretations of the data as well as of the national and international factors pertinent to the current socio-economic crises in Egypt. Accumulation of published and unpublished documents relevant to the study continued right up to the writing of the final draft of this dissertation. I tried to examine the data as objectively as possible and to bow to empirical evidence. Thus, I remained open to challenges based on empirical evidence.

Being a woman is both an advantage and a disadvantage in obtaining the cooperation of female respondents. From my perspective, I found it somewhat disappointing that female respondents reacted more favorably to male authority than they did to me. While I wanted to interact with the respondents on a woman-to-woman basis, discussing personal subjects from a woman's perspective, with mutual concern and respect, many respondents were much more interested in obtaining the favor and acceptance of a male during the interview.[20]

Because I was concerned that some of the respondents might be distorting or even withholding information or opinions to please the male authority figure and/or me, I was very careful to verify their responses using a variety of techniques. First of all, with such respondents, I made sure that their husbands and other male authority figures were not in the household at the time of the interview. There were some occasions when my husband had to be present, usually at the insistence of the respondent. When this was the case, my husband was a reliable mediator since both the respondent and the purpose of the research were well known to him. Because I also knew most of these women, I could raise what seemed to be contradictions in what they were saying during the interview with what I already knew about them and/or with what they may have said earlier in an interview. Sometimes, I could raise the issue again with the respondents when there was no one else present. Sometimes, I would also raise the issue with other women closely related or associated with the respondents without breaking any confidence.

My status as a mature woman with grown children was also advantageous in obtaining cooperation from respondents. Only thirteen (25.5%) respondents were older than me, so my seniority in the life-cycle operated to my advantage. Post-menopausal women in Egypt have fewer restrictions placed upon them and they command more authority than younger women.

Difficulties presented by hostile social interactions between classes in Egypt also affected the pace of the research and the interviews. Some respondents resented my interviewing women from different classes, believing that I should not mix so freely with women from very different classes. Indeed, the level of hostility towards me about this prevented some well-educated women from participating in the study.

C. Influence of Participants on the Researcher

Conducting participant observation research over an extended period of time, particularly amongst individuals whom the researcher has known intimately for a very long time, is potentially conflictive and may result in the researcher being unduly influenced by one or more of the participants, the interpreters, and other informants and/or facilitators. This may take many forms and be due to many factors.

For instance, individuals with strong ideological commitments as well as activities and/or allegiances to partisan political and/or religious organizations may put great pressure on the researcher to not include others with opposing views in the research and/or to reach conclusions which might not necessarily reflect the data. Differences in class, religion, region, ethnicity-social group, age, occupation, and so on are also other significant influences in determining respondents' perspectives and world-views, which can result in their attempts to influence the researcher's views, interpretation of data, and even behavior and actions.

On a more positive note, respondents may try to protect the researcher from possible harm by urging more restricted activities; curtailing the number and range of types of women interviewed and neighborhoods visited, as well as the places where interviews are conducted; and insisting that a responsible man accompany the researcher at all times. One particular pressure which I felt during many of the interviews was the insistence that I portray Egyptian women in a "good light". These respondents were aware of the negative Western portrayal of Muslim women in the Middle East. Some seemed relieved that I would be able to show Westerners that Egyptian women are not sad, downtrodden beasts of burden in need of liberation by Western feminists.

Egyptians are a very verbal people who are used to exerting their views forcefully in order to be heard. They usually do not accept "no" for an answer and will insist on your accepting whatever it is they are offering, whether an argument or more food. This approach may make it difficult for a non-native researcher since it is not common in Anglo-Saxon culture, which if anything could be described as more reserved and understated in use of language.

Because I was aware of these influences, I used multiple sources to verify information and even opinions; this included respondents, informants, and printed and broadcast media. This triangulation of sources of evidence strengthened the "truthfulness" and "objectivity" of the data and minimized any possible undue distortion from any of the sources. In addition, I tried to maintain some balance and perspective by alternating the activities I undertook as well as occasionally taking some time off from them. I also discussed some of these pressures with others who are experienced at doing research, including extensive interviewing, in Egypt.

D. Reliability

Reliability of the data obtained is important for the validity of any study. Because of the subjective nature of the data itself as well as the manner in which it is obtained, reliability must be assured. I believe that in conducting any interview, one can never be sure that the subject is being truthful (Hale, 1991; Reinharz, 1992:65; Rugh, 1986:viii-ix). There are many reasons for this, power relationships being significant. Patriarchal, capitalist societies are based on domination and exploitation, which results in multiple axes of inequalities. Much of this has been hidden from public discourse, even in Canada, until recently. The development of the women's liberation movement and other social justice movements have brought many of these issues into public debate in the West, and more recently in Eastern Europe.

In a country like Egypt, the main public movements have been nationalist, anti-colonial (primarily pre-1960), and more recently Islamic militant groups opposed to corruption as well as the lack of opportunities for educated people to do productive work to support their families, and the lack of sufficient services (health, education, welfare) for the vast majority of people. For instance, the Egyptian government has stopped building schools and slowed down the building of health clinics in rural areas. This has exacerbated the overcrowded conditions of existing facilities. Islamic fundamentalist groups have been building health clinics and schools, but do not allow access to Christians. This pits Muslims against Christians and poor people against the government.

Egyptians are used to paternalistic, authoritarian rule, and hold their governments responsible for the deteriorating socio-economic conditions and political situation. The people, in general, blame the government and believe that a new government, or at least a new regime, would need to be "installed" to change things for the better. Thus, at the moment, most Egyptians are very upset with the current government, but there is great disagreement and conflict about what the solution should be.[21]

Egyptians are, ultimately, pragmatic people, and ideology in general is less effective in mobilizing people than actual material results. Therefore, I do not believe that in the long-run the Islamic militants will maintain support of the masses unless they are able to establish institutions capable of maintaining a modern nation state and improving the standard of living of the majority. At this time, they are less capable of doing that than the present government is, and many people realize this. Most Egyptians are also quite angry that their livelihood has been seriously undermined by the Islamic militants' attack on the tourist industry.

These factors are important because at the moment most people are very unhappy and confused in Egypt and so less likely than ever to tell you what their feelings and ideas are. In an authoritarian police state, people have been conditioned to give others what they want and to be very careful about what they say. Even in happier times, it is difficult to get consistent answers from a person precisely because s/he does not want to be pinned down, does not want you to think you have her/his position figured out. People are particularly resistant to expressing their personal beliefs and feelings. Even within an extended family, people conform, at least formally, to the demands of their superiors and do not express personal views. Alternatively, people protect themselves by expressing different, even contradictory, opinions depending upon the situation and/or the persons with whom they are speaking.

Developing good rapport with the subject is particularly important in Egypt because of the very harsh nature of social relations between classes, as has already been mentioned.[22] My daughters are adults now; and as a woman who has successfully managed my role as wife and mother in the eyes of Egyptian women, I am accepted as a mature person. Since my husband's parents are now dead, as the eldest male, he is the head of the extended family and I am the senior female in the family -- which gives me a great deal of status, authority, and power within the family. My mother-in-law appreciated me as I not only developed a good relationship with her but also treated her as a person and fought for her vested interests within the family and society. In my facilitation of family matters, I am respected by my husband's relatives.

In addition to my family ties, I know that most educated Egyptian women, whether family members or not, are very interested in discussing the general topic of gender roles and how they have changed in Egypt as well as how they differ from Canada. I knew that if I began my research with women whom I know well, I would have a firm foundation from which to add data from a broader base of participants. The acceptance and trust which I have with the respondents is a product of long personal relationships with them. It does not require intersubjective agreement. In addition to this, Egypt is in a terrible turmoil now over the roles of women in society, and so the topic has become extremely controversial and volatile politically and morally.

Because I was raised in an Anglo-Saxon culture with very different values from those of Egyptian culture, I can never see social reality in the same way that Egyptian women do. Nevertheless, there are many things which I can see in much the same way as Egyptian women because I, too, have been subject to many of the same constraints of gender and exclusion from the patriarchal, male-dominated public domain in general. My own struggle with patriarchy, however, is not well understood by Egyptian women because most of them have not questioned the legitimacy of patriarchy nor the essentialist, foundationalist view of gender.

Therefore, my research allows the participants to present their own interpretation and analysis as well as their own ideas about future possibilities for women in Egypt. Not all respondents share the same beliefs and views, but each of them will recognize her voice in this dissertation. My task then becomes setting their interpretations within a framework which takes into account both theoretical and empirical developments in the world challenging the legitimacy of patriarchy and capitalism.

IV. Analysis

Upon my return to Canada, the bulk of the coding was completed and the analysis was undertaken. New computer files were created, one for each photograph used in the interview process, and each respondent's comments about a particular photograph were entered into the file for that photograph in order of the respondent's identification number. Chapters Four, Five, Six and Seven present the qualitative data and reflect the ethnographic research. In addition to the qualitative aspect of the research, I also utilized quantitative manipulation of the data. Because of the large number of variables and cases, it was impossible to compile and compare data without the benefit of having coded it into a computerized data base. In fact, printing out frequency counts of the data proved necessary to verify the accuracy of the coded data. Besides providing frequency counts on all the coded variables, many of the variables were cross-tabulated to facilitate comparison. Although no claims of statistical validity are made, this manipulation of the data made it possible to categorize data, run descriptive statistics, and determine general patterns. The descriptive characteristics of the women who participated in this study which follow derive from the more quantitative aspect of the analysis.

A. Who are the Respondents and How Representative are They of Egyptian Women?

In order to explore the gender identity and gender roles of Egyptian women, it was necessary to investigate many demographic and other socio-economic factors to determine their salience. Thus, detailed data were recorded for each respondent which included the following variables: place of birth, religion, ethnicity, age, occupation, employment status, class, social status, education, language, marital status, composition of families of origin and procreation, composition of household, mode of transportation, and participation in civil society.

The fifty-one respondents interviewed for this study lived in forty-four separate households. Thirty-six (70.1%) of the fifty-one respondents were born in the greater Cairo area, four (7.8%) in the Delta governorates, two (3.9%) in the Suez Canal area, one (2%) in Fayyūm, five (9.8%) in the *Sa'īd* (Upper Egypt), one in the U.S.A., and one in England.[23] Thirty-nine (76.5%) respondents were born in an urban area and twelve (23.5%) were born in a rural area.[24]

Although most of the respondents were born in the greater Cairo area, most of their parents were, in fact, born in farming areas and villages, and most of them retained close ties to their place of origin. Large-scale rural-urban migration, particularly by the poor, has resulted in the "villagization" of Cairo. In fact, most of the respondents who were not born in Cairo were poor and had little education.

In terms of religion, three (5.9%) respondent were Coptic Christians and forty-eight (94.1%) were Sunni Muslims. This is proportional to the Egyptian population as a whole (Jenefsky, 1991:208; UNDP, 1996).[25]

In terms of ethnicity, forty (78.4%) respondents were "Egyptian", four (7.8%) were *Sa'īdi*, four (7.8%) were Nubian, two (3.9%) were of Ottoman-Turkish descent, and one (2%) was of Lebanese descent. Although there are several different bedouin tribes, minorities of European descent such as Portugese, Greeks and Armenians as well as other very small, localized minority groups, their numbers in Cairo are extremely low so that their not being represented in the sample is not problematic.[26]

In terms of age, two (3.9%) respondents were teenagers, fourteen (27.5%) were in their twenties, thirteen (25.5%) in their thirties, eight (15.7%) in their forties, nine (17.6%) in their fifties, two in their sixties, and two in their seventies. Although only four respondents were over the age of sixty, eight reported that they are retired. Life expectancy for all Egyptians has risen from 53 years in 1973 to 62 years in 1987 (World Bank, 1991:155); nevertheless, respondents reported that people over the age of forty are generally regarded as "old". Extrapolating from figures provided by the World Bank (*Ibid.*:9), approximately 4% of the Egyptian **rural** population (female and male) is aged 65 or older, 44% are under the age of fifteen, and 52% are aged 15-64.[27] In fact, according to the 1986 Census data, 34% of all Egyptians were under the age of 12 years! (*Ibid.*:79). My sample does not include individuals under the age of sixteen since the target group of study is adult women. Nevertheless, because the legal age of marriage for females in Egypt is sixteen, it would enhance the representativeness of the sample to have had more respondents aged 16-19.

Ten (19.6%) of the fifty-one respondents were single, never married and not engaged at the time of the interviews. Three (5.9%) other women were single but engaged to be married within a year of the interviews. Thus, thirteen (25.5%) of the respondents had never married. Thirty (58.8%) women were married, three were divorced, and five (9.8%) were widowed at the time of the interviews. A total of thirty-four (66.7%) of the fifty-one respondents had been married once and four (7.8%) others had been married twice. Reflecting the traditional pattern of men marrying women many years their junior, the average difference in age between wife and husband was seven years, though the gap ranged from -2 to twenty years.

With regards to the number and age of children borne to the respondents, distinction must be made between the number of children born to a woman and the number of children who survived childhood, because of the very high infant mortality rate in Egypt.[28] Even well-educated, upper-middle class women in Egypt lose young children due to illness at a higher rate than in the West, as was, indeed, the case for some of the rich, well-educated respondents. Of the thirty-six women who had borne children, the mean number of children born was 3.2, with a range from one to nineteen. The mean number of surviving children, however, was 2.7, with a range from one to six. For one middle-aged respondent, only six of nineteen children had survived childhood. It should be remembered that since a number of the women were still in their childbearing years, these figures are an underestimate of completed family size. Also, given the age range of the women, the age of their children varied from under one year to 43.

At the time of the interviews, eleven (21.6%) respondents were students. Four were at the American University in Cairo, five at Cairo University, one at al-'Azhar University, and one at a private, Egyptian high school.[29] In terms of education, five (9.8%) of the respondents had no schooling whatsoever and were illiterate, one (2%) had completed primary school, one had some preparatory schooling, six (11.8%) had some academic high school and two had completed academic high school, one had completed commercial high school, three (5.9%) had some higher education, twenty-two (43.1%) had completed bachelor degrees, two were medical doctors, three (5.9%) held master degrees and another had a master degree in medicine, one was a dental surgeon in prosthodontics, and three had a Ph.D. Grouped within four categories, six (11.8%) women had primary education or less, one woman had some preparatory schooling, nine (17.6%) had at least some high school education, and thirty-five (68.6%) had at least some higher education. Thus, sixteen (31.4%) women had no post-secondary education.

In 1982, the Egyptian Ministry of Education estimated that 30% of the entire Egyptian population had never been to a school (World Bank, 1991:220). In 1986, 61.8% of the female population in Egypt aged ten and older was illiterate, though only 44.4% of the urban female population in Egypt was illiterate (*Ibid.*:207; ARE MOE, 1992:94). For women in the Cairo governorate, the illiteracy rate was 39.2% in 1986 (*Op cit.*:35).[30] Thus, my sample grossly under-represents this significant group of Egyptian women. At the other end of the educational ladder, the MOE (*Ibid.*:94;78) reported that by 1991/92, 5.4% of all urban Egyptian women had completed at least one university degree. Since 63.3% of my sample (thirty-five of the fifty-one respondents) had some higher education, of which five (9.8% of the fifty-one respondents) were in the university-aged cohort, this group is grossly over represented in the study.[31]

The question of under-representation of illiterate women and over-representation of university-educated women can be addressed from different perspectives. The choices available to well-educated women are tremendously greater than those available to illiterate women in terms of personal freedom to make decisions, behavior patterns, and social roles. The bargaining power of well-educated women vis-à-vis their fathers and husbands is also significantly greater than that of illiterate women. Thus, there seems to be much greater variability in the behavior and social roles of well educated women than for illiterate and poorly educated women. This diminishes concerns about the small sample size of women with no higher education.

In terms of languages spoken, five (9.8%) respondents spoke only Arabic. In addition to Arabic, twenty-one (41%) respondents spoke one other language and twenty-five (49%) spoke three or more languages. Thus, seven (13.7%) of the respondents spoke languages indigenous to Egypt, Arabic and Nubian, compared to forty-four (86.3%) who spoke at least one Western European language in addition to Arabic. This, however, obscures the fact that English and French are usually studied in high school and, in the case of fifteen (34.1%) respondents, their command of these languages was at best "fair". Eleven respondents had "good" command of a European language and twenty respondents had "excellent" command.

French is still common among women of the upper-middle and upper classes as it is the language of the "old" elite and of civil servants involved in diplomacy, and continues to be the language of instruction in law.[32] English, however, is the language of the middle class, those involved in commerce, and middle and high levels of the civil service because of its international currency, and by the lower classes because of their dependency on the tourist industry. It is also the language of instruction in several university programs, most notably medicine. Thus, English is the foreign language most widely spoken foreign language in Egypt. In total, twenty-six (51%) respondents spoke French and forty (78.4%) respondents spoke English.

Occupation, employment status, and employment sector data were obtained for the respondents. Sixteen (31.4%) respondents had never been employed nor had to work to contribute to the family income. This considerable proportion of women who had never worked reflects the over-representation of the upper and middle classes in this study. Certainly, the experience of working class and peasant women, who form the large majority of the Egyptian population, is to work. Nineteen (37.3%) respondents were employed full-time at the time of the interviews and nine (17.6%) were employed part-time.[33] Of the six (11.8%) respondents who had been previously employed, five were no longer involved in employment or volunteer activities and one was volunteering full-time in community projects. Eight (15.7%) respondents were retired at the time of the interviews. Thus, thirty-five of the respondents (68.6%) had been employed at least sometime prior to the interviews. Interestingly, fifteen of these respondents did not work prior to marriage but did so after marriage, three worked before marriage but not after marriage, and five worked both before and after marriage. The other twelve were never married.

Twenty respondents (57.1% of those who worked) had work experience in the private sector -- including the informal economy, sixteen exclusively so; and fifteen respondents (42.9% of those who worked) had work experience in the public sector, eleven exclusively so. The range of respondents' occupations was broad, including the following: homemaker, domestic servant, *bawābah* (residential security guard), street hawker, secretary, high school and university student, hotel receptionist-translator, researcher, school social worker, teacher, principal, librarian, accountant, architect, economist-human resource officer-women and development advisor, anthropologist-community development worker, lawyer, engineer, physician, dental surgeon, university lecturer, and scientist.

In terms of social class, it is extremely difficult to use income as an indicator of class in Egypt. Even using education as an indicator for social class is difficult. In a society where family (clan) name and history is extremely important, persons are identified according to the status of their family clan. There are three broad layers of class in Egypt which have existed since the demise of Pharaonic civilization. Europeans became the most influential group during the nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century (Hansen, 1991). Though the influence of Europeans was diminished during the Nāsir era, it has regained strength since then. Until the Nationalist Revolution of 1952, the elite ruling class was constituted primarily by successive waves of various foreigners. Most members of this class were Turco-Egyptian, mostly of Albanian origin, though some were Turkish and Circassian (Van Vleck, 1990; Vatikiotis, 1980). They are still large landowners, politicians, professionals, and businessmen, though they are joined today by other Egyptians. The middle class, which remained extremely small until the mid-1970's, was made up of both Egyptians and foreign minorities, though they had different occupations and social roles (‘Amīn, 1995; Hansen, 1991; el-Messīrī, 1978a). The religious authorities and judges (‘*ulāmah*) as well as artisans, craftsmen, teachers and other professionals, and civil servants were primarily Egyptian, while most of the merchants were Greeks but some were Syrian, Lebanese, and Armenian. Today, most of the foreign minorities have left the country. Certain occupations were dominated by Copts, such as accounting and surveying, while others were dominated by Jews, such as trading, though this is not longer true since the creation of Israel and Nāsir's nationalization of private companies. The ‘*ulāmah* continue to function as a more fluid, open, socially mobile group acting as intermediaries between the rulers and the masses. The vast majority of Egyptians have always been peasant farmers; they constitute the low class.[34]

Eighteen (35.3%) of the respondents come from "old" elite families, though most of them are relatively impoverished now.[28] Some are still upper class, some are upper-middle class, but many are now only middle class. Twenty-one (41.2%) of the respondents come from middle class families, those who benefited from the 1952 Revolution. Six (11.8%) of the respondents come from lower-middle class families. One (2%) of the respondents comes from an urban, lower class family. Five (9.8%) of the respondents come from rural, illiterate peasant families.

Due to deteriorating socio-economic conditions in Egypt, many families members are experiencing different opportunities than those of their parents, grandparents and/or their children. Thus, the peculiar situation exists, for instance, of having grandparents who are middle class having children who are only lower-middle class because they cannot afford to pay for private tutoring and/or to send them to university, and thus whose own children's future looks very perilous at the moment.

Because of the importance of education in social mobility in Egypt, social policy changes regarding education have enormous effects on most Egyptians. If parents are unable to afford private schools and/or the private tutoring necessary for academic achievement required to enter university, their children will end up in the lower-middle class and have very restricted social and economic opportunities.

Education has a bigger pay-off for lower class and lower-middle class girls than for boys, especially if the girls are beautiful. This is because a middle or upper-middle class family would be more open to having their son marry a well-educated, beautiful woman from a lower or lower-middle class background than having their daughter marry such a man. Women become part of the extended family of their husbands, and middle class families would not allow their daughters to fall in class status. A man from a lower or lower-middle class would have to have a post-graduate education and a great deal of money and property in order to attract a woman from a middle class family. Such men are rare.

Having sketched this picture of the respondents, the following chapters present the respondents' perceptions and discussion of women, their status, their rights and responsibilities, and their roles.

Chapter Three End Notes

1

In addition to the references cited in the text, I have made use of the following sources to inform the research process: 'Abū-Lughod (1988 and 1990), Acker (1983), Alasuutari (1995), Belsey (1980), Bernstein (1983), Blumer (1969), Bolak (1996), Bredo and Feinberg (1982), Denzin (1989a/b and 1997), Denzin and Lincoln (1994 and 1998a/b/c), Fine (1996), Flaherty and Ellis (1992), Garfinkel (1967), M. Gergen (1994), Gergen and Gergen (1993), Glaser and Strauss (1967), Goetz, *et al.* (1984), Guba (1978), Hale (1991), Keddie (1979), Kessler and McKenna (1978), Krieger (1985), Lincoln and Guba (1985), Linde (1993), Lopata (1983), Patton (1990), Rabinow (1979), Runyan (1984), Stacey (1988), Stanley and Wise (1983), Taylor and Bogdan (1984), and Van Dusen (1976).

2

Attention by academics to the everyday life of ordinary people has waxed and waned over time as well as across the disciplines in Canada as well as the U.S.A. When I was completing my undergraduate studies in sociology in the late 1960's, U.S. society, including universities, was being challenged by both civil rights and radical student movements. The importance of everyday life was very central to these movements. I recall even the textbooks used in my courses emphasized everyday life: "'[E]veryday life' [means] not so much...the commonplace or usual, but, rather,...its connotation of both the **mundane** and the **salient**" (Truzzi, 1968:1). Much more recently, Dorothy Smith (1987) has written a feminist sociology text focusing on the everyday life of ordinary people.

3

In this sense, this study also employs a critical modernist post-positivist paradigm of research methodologies which combines elements of critical realist and historical realist ontology with modified dualist/objectivist and transactional/subjectivist epistemology (Cook and Campbell, 1979; Fay, 1975, 1987; Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

4

Consider the work of Peter Blau (1964, 1977), George Homans (1950, 1974), George Herbert Mead (1934/1967), Alfred Schutz (1932/1967), and Erving Goffman (1959;1961;1967;1971;1974;1976;1977), all of whom address interaction and consciousness, individually and collectively (Guba, 1990:255).

5

For me, the belief that men and women should have the **same** rights and responsibilities in the family and in society is integral to the essence of feminism. From this point of view, it is impossible to hold an essentialist notion of gender and be a feminist. Therefore, people who believe that men and women are "equal" but that they have different rights and responsibilities cannot e considered feminist. This is similar to the concept of apartheid and racism; apartheid means separation and segregation, even if you believe that the races are"equal but different". Thus, supporting the concept of gender involves belief that the sexes are necessarily different in personality, behavior traits, and social roles because of their biological sex. I reject this position.

6

For people familiar with Egyptian society, it is obvious that being a mother of a son is the most important marker of womanhood and social status as a woman. The majority of Egyptian women are usually called "Mother of..." rather than by their own first name. Afshar (1991:10) is one researcher who explicitly mentions the high status of women as mothers. I have two daughters, and so am often asked, "When are you going to have children?" since girls "don't count". See also 'Aly and Shields (1991).

7

While there have been analyses of mass media in Egypt, both by Egyptians and Westerners, this literature focuses on class, regional, and national identities, rather than on gender ('Abdel-Kader, 1982, 1985; L. 'Abū-Lughod, 1993a and b; Armbrust, 1996; Culhane, 1992; Talaat, 1987). Much of it also focuses on film, stage plays, and literature rather than the print media and billboards. I interviewed many professors of mass media at the American University in Cairo, Cairo University, and private researchers to ascertain the level of interest and activity researching gender stereotyping in the mass media. To my surprise, all the university professors interviewed considered this a strange question and wondered why it would be of concern. When I explained that this is a big issue in the West, only one professor indicated that s/he would sometimes include gender as one of the topics in her/his course, but that it was not integral to the mass media courses in the department/faculty. There was more interest amongst Egyptian women conducting private research. Research done on the effect of posters and billboards on Egyptians is meager and focuses primarily on their effectiveness as a means of adult education in government-run family planning and literacy campaigns.

8

Though I use the term "billboard" here, it actually includes many advertisements which would not be considered billboards in the West, most of which would not exist in the West. For instance, it is common in Egypt for an advertisement to be painted onto the entire side of a multi-story apartment or office building. Some of these ads were eight stories high and half as wide. In most of these cases, the ad is actually painted onto the cement and/or bricks of the building. In other cases, the ad is painted onto large metal sheets which are rivetted together and placed on the side or roof of the building. Less frequently, they are painted on wood which is secured to the building.

Billboards in Egypt are commonly placed along the side of the road, usually in long groups in two or three rows totalling twenty-five separate billboards per group. The main streets, particularly downtown and on the major arterial roads leading from wealthy suburbs to downtown, are literally lined with billboards.

Another difference between billboards in the West and in Egypt is that an older, cheaper, and less professional method of producing the billboard images is used. They do not use the photographic method which is currently the standard in the West, but rather images which are hand-painted by many painters over a projected image. Thus, the art work is very crude and images are not as artistically attractive as Western billboard images.

9

The harshness with which superiors treat subordinates historically in Egypt has also been noted by El-Messīrī (1978:32-35).

10

Judith Cochrane (1997) explains the failure of a U.S. aid program to educate Egyptians in the U.S.A. because the U.S. partner institution had not taken into account these habits and other cultural differences. She recommended no further exchanges until these issues were dealt with more explicitly and satisfactorily.

11

In fact, very few interviews were conducted in a public sector workplace, and none of the respondents were interviewed in a private sector workplace.

12

Two respondents were interviewed at their residences and also at my residence, one at her residence and at the American University in Cairo campus, and one at my residence and at the residence of her employer.

13

Interestingly, as I am making the final revisions to this dissertation, Landis and Gyr of Switzerland and Telecom of France signed a contract with Arento, the Egyptian state telecommunications company, to build 40,000 telephone booths in Egypt over the next five years. These telephones would use only phone cards. (Agence France-Presse, October 19, 1997.)

14

The front car in each train, however, has been restricted to women and children since 1989. Even though it was always crowded, it was a relief not to be harassed by men. Nevertheless, men would constantly try to get into the women's car and harass as many women as they could before being caught by a conductor and expelled. Sometimes the women in the car would shout at the man, cursing and berating him, beating at him to shoo him off the train.

I lived a five minute drive from a train station, though it would take at least 30 minutes to walk there. Although walking is often the fastest mode of transportation, it is also hazardous, particularly for a woman solo.

Unlike most parts of Cairo, there was never any traffic jam on the streets between my residence and the train station because it was a quiet upper-middle class residential neighborhood. Many of the streets, however, are unpaved and so one would quickly be covered in dust walking a short distance in the streets. Most of the residents seen walking in the streets are lower and lower-middle class people, since virtually all the middle and upper-middle class residents own their own cars and would never walk very far in the road.

Because the temperature rarely drops below 25 degrees Celsius, and usually exceeds 35 degrees nine months of the year, and because of the high levels of air pollution and related humidity, I found it very exhausting walking during the daytime. Even with my "dust cover" on, I would get very dirty walking in the streets, so I preferred to drive or take a micro-bus to the train station.

15

Indeed, when Lila 'Abū-Lughod undertook her first ethnographic study of a bedouin community in Egypt, her father, who is Palestinian, insisted on accompanying her because he understood that it would be nearly impossible for her to be accepted as a respectable person if she were there without a male guardian (L. 'Abū-Lughod, 1986:11and 1988).

16

Some of these men assumed that I would also date them and become sexually involved with them. Although these men were married, highly educated, and had studied and/or worked abroad for extended periods, some of them played "cat and mouse" with me despite my continued insistence that I was not interested and not amused. Unfortunately, a woman is still a walking vagina n Cairo; and if you do not have a male guardian, then you are every man's woman.

17

For more detailed discussion about the "Orientalist vs post-Orientalist" debate and its critique, see 'Abū-Odeh (1992), Ghoussoub (1987 and 1988), Hammami and Rieker (1988), Kandiyoti (1996), Karam (1997), E. Sa'īd (1978, 1986, and 1989), and Sayigh (1981). Samīr 'Amīn is a particularly vehement critique of this debate. Also, see Mehdid (1993) for a discussion of "Orientalist" writings about Arab women and their identity as well as her criticism of Edward Sa'īd (1978) for overlooking this.

'Abū-Odeh (1992:1536) brings together both the criticism of Orientalism and the criticism of Western feminism vis-à-vis writings about Arab women in her discussion of veiling:

> Of course, a veiled woman is not necessarily either "this" or "that". She might shift from one position to another...A veiled woman's subjectivity appears to be much more complicated than any meaning the word "veil" could possibly convey.
>
> For the feminist, the multiplicity of veiled sexuality could be very exciting, promising rich interaction and dialogue with veiled women. Her position, accordingly, could become more nuanced and multiple. Instead of dismissing them as the enemy, the threat, the false conscious, she could see them as the varied, divided, seemingly united, **female community trying to survive in an environment that is as hostile to them as it is to her.** It is this multiplicity that invites conversation between the "same" rather than the apartness of the "other".

18

I never began any interview without first explaining the nature and purpose of the research I was doing. I asked each respondent to read the consent form and sign it if she agreed to carry out the interview. I had both English and Arabic consent forms. If a respondent spoke English, I gave her the option of signing the English or the Arabic consent form. For those illiterate women who were unable to sign their names, in some cases a daughter signed for her or the translator signed for her.

19

Some of the most common responses I would get is, "That's not scientific," "This doesn't look like any test I have done before!", Why do Canadian women want to know these things about us?" "Why is this necessary to complete your degree?"

20

Some of the respondents were uneasy about conducting the interview without my husband present, though other respondents were just as adamant that my husband not be present. With few exceptions, however, respondents reacted much more favorably to an interview if my husband or some other "respected" male accompanied me. Their behavior was typical of subordinates currying favor: they were coy, deferential, projected an image of exaggerated helplessness, and even flirted. They actively sought the man's understanding and approval. They were much less interested in my understanding their responses during the interviews.

21

See al-'Alī (1997), al-'Azim (1981), Geadah (1996), el-Messīrī (1978), Mitchell and 'Abū-Lughod (1993), el-Sayyid (1993:241-242), Singerman (1994), Sonbol (1988) and Waterbury (1983)

22

With the rising expectations of Egyptians in all socio-economic groups, it is becoming difficult for wealthy Egyptians to find Egyptians who are willing to work as domestic servants. Even poor Egyptian women are reluctant to do domestic work or errands for the rich. It has now become a matter of pride not to accept such low status work. Therefore, it is becoming common for the wealthy to employ women from other countries, particularly the Philippines.

23

This information was missing for one respondent, who was probably born in the Delta.

24

Neighborhood birthplace in greater Cairo data were missing for twelve (23.5%) respondents; however, twenty-four other respondents' neighborhood of birth included the following eleven Cairo neighborhoods: 'Abdīn (1), al-'Agūzah (2), al-'Azhar-al-Ḫussaynī (1), al-Basātīn (3), al-Duqqi (5), al-Gīzah (1), Hilmayyah al-Zaytūn (1), al-Ma'ādi (4), Masr al-Gadīdah (4), al-Rūdah (1), and Shubrah (1).

These neighborhoods can be classified as according to socio-economic status of the residents, with five respondents from three lower class districts, two from a lower-middle to middle class area, one from a middle class neighborhood, and sixteen from five middle to upper-middle class areas.

The respondents' residential neighborhood in Cairo at the time of the interviews included the following: al-'Agūzah (3), 'Ain Shams-'Ard an-Na'im (1), al-Basātīn (4), Diglah (5), al-Duqqi (6), Garden City (1), al-Gīzah (1), Hadā'iq al-'Ahram (1), al-Haram (3), Hilmayyah az-Zaytūn (1), al-Ma'ādī (9), al-Ma'ādī al-Gadīdah (1), Madinat Nasr (1), Masr al-Gadīdah (4), al-Muḥandisīn (7), ar-Rūdah (2), and Shubrah (1). In terms of the social class of the residents, two respondents were from lower class districts, three were from lower-middle class-middle class districts, three were from middle class districts, six were in middle class to upper-middle class districts, and two were in upper-middle class districts.

It must be noted that although a neighborhood can be broadly classified by the socio-economic status of the majority of its residents, this obscures the fact that middle and upper-middle class neighborhoods have extremely poor lower class residents, most of whom work as *bawabīn* (live-in security guards). Even neighborhoods which are generally regarded as lower class areas may have fairly wealthy residents, reflecting the fact that younger people have obtained an education and are earning a good salary but still living with the extended family. Ironically, most of the poor people interviewed in this study live in very rich areas and some of the well-to-do women live in very poor areas.

I have categorized Cairo neighborhood referred to in this study by social class as: lower class: al-'Azhar-al-Ḥussaynī, al-Basātīn, Shubrah; lower-middle class: al-Gīzah, al-Haram, Hilmayyah az-Zaytūn; middle class: 'Abdīn, 'Ain Shams-'Ard an-Na'im, Madinat Nasr, al-Ma'ādī al-Gadīdah; middle to upper-middle class: al-'Agūzah, Diglah, al-Duqqi, al-Ma'ādī, Masr al-Gadīdah, al-Muhandisīn, ar-Rūdah; and upper class: Garden City and Hadā'iq al-'Ahram.

These neighborhoods include far northeast, far north, far south, southeast, far southwest, northwest, west, and central parts of Cairo. Cairo fans out covering a broader area east-west in the far north and far south and being more narrow in the central region. The only neighborhoods left out were those of the far northwest, though they are comparable to those of the far north. Thus, no particular "type" of neighborhood has been overlooked in this study.

25

According to The Middle East Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 7 ed., 1990, 94% of Egyptians were Muslim and 6% Coptic Christian (Cited in Jenefsky, 1991:208).

26

Categories used were self-reported. They are, nonetheless, also categories used generally in Egypt, as indicated in the sources below.

One of the women categorized as "Egyptian" was, in fact, a an elderly bedouin woman whose land was engulfed by an expanding Cairo. I have not categorized her as bedouin since she has not lived as a bedouin for several decades. Nevertheless, she had lived a semi-nomadic life and lived in a tent for the first half of her life. In any case, even if she is categorized as a bedouin, this would make her inclusion in the sample proportional to the bedouin population in Egypt as a whole (UNDP, 1996; http://www.bethany-wpc.org/profiles/p_code1/161.html, September 27, 1998).

Nubians constituted about 8% of the sample, as did *Sai'īdis*. For Nubians, this is significantly higher than their proportion of the population in greater Cairo as well as for Egypt (UNDP, 1996; http://www.bethany-wpc.org/profiles/p_code5/er.html,and http://www.bethany-wpc.org/profiles/clusters/8030a.html, September 27, 1998).

The U.S. Library of Congress put the total number of ethnic minorities in Egypt at 3 per cent of the population in 1989, with the Arab bedouins (some forcibly settled) at 500,000 to 1 million, Greeks at 350,000, Nubians at 160,000, Armenians at 12,000, and Berber bedouins at 6,000 (http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+eg0069, September 27, 1998).

I have not been able to find any source of data on Sai'īdīs, even though they are a distinctive group culturally, linguistically, and ethnically in Egypt. They are the butt of jokes in Cairo and the Delta, being thought of as backward and traditional. This is very similar to the stereotype of Newfoundlanders in Canada, who are also subject to many "Newfie" jokes in the rest of Canada. While the population of *Sai'īdis* is significant in Egypt, I am unsure about their numbers in Cairo. While unable to obtain published data, I estimate that their numbers would also be significantly higher than other minorities in greater Cairo. Therefore, my sample would under-represent *Sai'īdis* in Cairo as well as in Egypt. This was the result of various difficulties encountered conducting the research, as indicated in this chapter.

27

It was difficult to get recent national data on age, so the data reported here refer to the rural population. Hence, I have bolded the word "rural" in order to alert the reader to the fact that the data is not national.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the terms "rural" and "urban" are used in this study in the same way that they are used in all the references provided: urban means town/city while rural means outside the town/city. For instance, see World Bank (1991:xiv). See also J. 'Abū-Lughod (1969) and Goiten (1969).

28

The World Bank (1991:xiv;155;190) reports an infant mortality rate in Egypt of 60 per 1,000 (44.7 in 1987, down from 116 in 1970), a child (aged 1-4 years) mortality rate of 7.4 per 1,000 (down from 42.8 in 1970), and a survival ratio of 87.1, as well as commented that "...the situation in Egypt is relatively worse than in most other Middle East and North African countries (*Ibid.*)." The national average of 60 per thousand infant mortality rate, however, obscures the regional variation: from 42 in the "frontier" regions to 91 in Upper Egypt. (See also, Arab Republic of Egypt. National Population Council, 1993.)

The birth rate remains very high at 2.8%, as does the fertility rate at 4.5 (World Bank, 1991:79-80). This situation exists despite the fact that Egypt was one of the first countries in the Middle East to start and maintain a rural health service which provides free preventative and curative health services as well as family planning clinics, requiring newly-graduated physicians to spend a minimum of two years in rural areas serving the people in return for their free education (*Ibid.*:71).

29

One of them was on sabbatical from a full-time university position completing her Ph.D. in distance education. The others were studying psychology, English literature, social work, anthropology, sociology, commerce, chemical engineering, teaching Arabic-as-a-Second Language, and residency in medicine.

30

The age group included is not indicated in the original source, but it is most probably all females aged ten and older.

31

During the school year 1986/87, 74.1% of the girls aged 6-11 were enrolled in primary schools (World Bank, 1991:208). Girls, however, constituted only 44.1% of all students in primary schools during 1985/86 (*Ibid.*:79). Nevertheless, there is a 15%-20% drop out rate and even those dropping out at grade six do not retain functional literacy and numeracy (*Ibid.*:76).

The Egyptian Ministry of Education estimated that 40% of the entire population had received only primary schooling in 1982 (World Bank, 1991:220). If 40% of this number were females, then probably only 16% of Egyptian females had received some primary schooling. In 1986, the MOE reported that 22% of all urban women in Egypt had basic literacy and numeracy skills (ARE MOE, 1992:94). Only 2% of the respondents in my sample were in this category, and so are moderately under-represented.

In 1985/86, 40.3% of all students enrolled in preparatory schools were girls (World Bank, 1991:79). The Egyptian Ministry of Education estimated in 1982 that only 12% of the entire Egyptian population had received some preparatory level schooling (*Ibid.*:220). The MOE believes that more than six years of education are required for an individual to remain functionally literate; the percentage of urban Egyptian women with at least some preparatory schooling could be estimated at between 22% and 28%, since these are the figures cited for women with literacy and numeracy skills and those with pre-university level schooling (ARE MOE, 1992:94). Since only 2% of respondents in my sample had some preparatory schooling, this group is moderately under represented in the study.

The Egyptian Ministry of Education estimated in 1982 that only 8% of the entire Egyptian population had received some high school level schooling (World Bank, 1991:220). In 1985/86, 37.6% of all students enrolled in general secondary schools were girls (*Ibid.*:220). The MOE also reported that 28.1% of urban females in 1986 had been educated to pre-university level (ARE MOE, 1992:94). If this is taken to mean that they have received a high school diploma, then my sample is slightly under representative, since only 17.6% of my respondents are in this category.

In 1982, the Egyptian Ministry of Education reported that only 10% of the university-aged cohort actually enrolled in post-secondary education in Egypt (World Bank, 1991:220). During 1985/86, 35% of the university cohort was female (*Ibid.*: 78-79). By 1991/92, the MOE reported that 5.4% of all urban Egyptian women had completed at least one university degree and that 19.8% of the entire university-age cohort was enrolled in higher education (ARE MOE, 1992:94;78). Thus, if the proportion of women to men in higher education remained roughly 35%, only about 7% of women in the university-aged cohort were enrolled in higher education in 1991/92.

32

Much to the relief of my husband's family, my children are fluent in French, and hence, able to attract an elite husband. In fact, one of my daughters speaks four languages and is currently learning a fifth one. It is common for elite women to speak two or three European languages, usually English and romance languages.

33

One respondent was on a one year educational leave from her full-time job at the time of the interviews. She was a full-time doctoral student at Cairo University; however, here she is being included with the women holding full-time employment, since her absence from work was relatively short. Her inclusion with women holding full-time jobs reflects her overall commitment to holding her job long-term. She is unmarried, in her late thirties, and unlikely to marry.

34

See G. 'Amīn (1995), el-Hamamsy (1985), Hansen (1991b), el-Messīrī (1978a), Van Vleck (1990), and Vatikiotis (1980)

Chapter Four
The Physical Woman: The Body

> **Standards of beauty describe in precise terms the relationship that an individual will have to her own body...her motility, spontaneity, posture, gait, the uses to which she can put her body. They define precisely the dimensions of her physical freedom...and the relationship between physical freedom and psychological development, intellectual possibility, and creative potential... Andrea Dworken (1974:113)**

> **...[I]f anatomy is destiny, women are discovering new ways to reshape both.**
> Amy Collins (1991)

I. Gender and Identity: The Idealized Beauty Image for Women in Egypt

As discussed in Chapter Three, photographs of billboard images of women were used as a projective device to elicit respondents' conceptualization of gender and identity in general. Through analysis of the dialogues, it was possible to identify what the respondents viewed as key elements of femininity and Egyptian identity. Though it is impossible to adequately discuss femininity without reference to masculinity, the emphasis of this research and the interviews is on how the women themselves conceptualized femininity, how they operationalized this, and what, if any, contradictions were identified.[1]

What became immediately evident during virtually all of the interviews was not only the categories which respondents identified and used to define and analyze gender in the images of women presented to them in the photographs, but also the order in which these categories were identified. First and foremost, it was the physical characteristics of women which were important: the focus was on the **body**. Not only was the female body itself used to determine appropriate versus inappropriate gender traits, it was also used to distinguish between Egyptian and foreign traits, including gender.

The second focus of the respondents in discussing gender was the **attire** worn by the women depicted in the photographs, including clothing, adornment, and accessories. Again, not only were these aspects of the images used to identify and define gender, but also to distinguish between Egyptian and foreign traits. Thus, Egyptian versus foreign identity emerged as an important distinction amongst the images of women depicted in billboards, and one closely related to gender conceptualization. Attire, adornment, and accessories are discussed in Chapter Five.

The third focus of respondents in identifying and defining gender was **character**, whether the woman depicted in the photograph was a "good" or "evil" woman, and/or whether she was "mannish" rather than "womanly". Categories used by respondents to make this determination included personality and body language as determined by facial expression; pose; projected sexuality; type of attire and adornment as well as what body parts were revealed or concealed; and drug use. These categories were combined by respondents to determine whether the women depicted in the photographs were "decent and moral" ("**good**") or "indecent and immoral" (**"evil"**). Somewhat related was whether the woman conformed to feminine gender identity or a more masculine gender identity. A "mannish" woman, while not necessarily "evil", was definitely not acceptable to the respondents. Nevertheless, it was clear that gender encompassed evaluative as well as normative criteria. Character is discussed in Chapter Six, focusing on the "evil" woman.

It is only after all of these determinations were made that respondents addressed the actual **roles** of women, both in the family and in society. It seems that respondents followed a chain of logic in determining the hierarchy of categories such that role was predetermined by the other levels of categorization. Thus, the **roles** of women can be divided between those of the "good" woman versus those of the "evil" woman. "Good" women are wives, mothers, and housekeepers, and perhaps productive workers contributing to the subsistence existence of the family. They are the women who are the private property of their fathers, brothers, husbands, sons, or other male kin. They are under male protection and are obedient to their male guardians. "Evil" women are none of these things; they are prostitutes, belly dancers, and perhaps also singers, actors, and *mu'allimāt* (*baladī* businesswomen). They are not under the protective ownership or guardianship of a man who is related by blood or marriage, and are, hence, considered the public property of every man. They are the opposite of the "good" woman in every sense and are despised and punished by the "good" people in society, women and men alike. Women's roles are discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. Chapter Seven addresses the characteristics, rights, and roles of ordinary women in Egyptian society.

Are these categories used by respondents an artifact of the billboard photographs used as a research instrument? This, of course, was not the intent of the study. Interviews with respondents were not restricted to the use of billboard photographs. While it may, however, be true that the process of looking at images of women depicted on billboards structured the responses of the interviewees, it is clear that respondents' views were not just a reaction to the billboard images. Questions posed to respondents did not focus on the billboard images *per se*, but on drawing out the respondents' own views about gender and female identity. The result of this field research is a comprehensive list of categories, and their relative importance, which respondents used to conceptualize what it means to be a woman.

II. The Physical Woman: The Body

In the interviews, the respondents all focussed first and foremost on the **physical characteristics** of the women portrayed in the billboards: attention was on the body. Was she beautiful? Was she Egyptian or foreign? The physical characteristics of the body which were identified by the respondents as central to femininity and Egyptian identity are broken down in the following sections of this chapter into the components used by respondents: age; skin color and ethnicity; body size and shape; facial features and the size and shape of face; and the type, color, length, and style of hair.

A. Age

Age is discussed first in this section addressing the physical characteristics of the beauty ideal because it encompasses elements of many of the other aspects of beauty identified by the respondents; and hence, it provides a framework for their comments about the images of women on billboards. Women depicted in billboard ads ranged in age from early adolescence to elderly, though the frequency of different age groups varied greatly. For example, only two ads (photos #32 and #34) portrayed adolescent girls, and they were not the main characters in the ads. Billboards depicting women in their twenties were much more numerous.[2] Twelve billboard ads portrayed women in their thirties.[3] One of them (photo #27 upper) was for a famous Tunisian singer named Latīfa, but she is portrayed looking much older and less attractive than she really is. In general, while respondents made a variety of comments about these images, their remarks did not focus on age as they did in the case of images of older women. Rather, their comments focussed on beauty and attractiveness. Nevertheless, it became apparent that age was an important marker of a woman's beauty and fertility.

Respondents explained that beauty is generally characterized in Egypt as "young, round, white, and sweet". Beautiful women are conceptualized as something pleasant and delicious to be consumed by men. Egyptian women are often compared to the moon, cuddly animals, sweet desserts, and sweet fruit. Common terms of endearment and praise for women include words such as: "moon" *'amūrah*, "cat" *[q]uttah*, "duck" *battah*, "water buffalo" *gāmūsah*, "watermelon" *batīkhah*, "rice pudding" *bālūszah*, "white egg pudding" *mahlabīyah*, "sweet thing" *halawah*, honey, *'asil*, "meat and fat" *lahmah wa shahmah*, and "white" and "egg" *baydah*. Implicitly, to be beautiful, one also has to be fertile.

Age is a very important factor in determining beauty in Egypt: the idealized beauty is young, from puberty to early twenties. This has been a constant throughout Egyptian history, since Pharaonic times, and is common to most patriarchal societies. A young female body is prized for two reasons: fertility to provide male heirs and attractiveness to men as an ornament, privately as a sex object and publicly as a status symbol. In Pharaonic Egypt, it was customary for girls to marry at puberty, usually to much older, established men; however, because premarital sex was common, virginity was not expected at marriage, unlike the norm during later periods (Robins, 1993; Rugh, 1984 and 1985; Sabbah, 1984; Tyldesley, 1994).

According to Arab Muslim tradition, perpetuated in Islam through its inclusion in the *Qur'ān*, girls are supposed to be married soon after their first menstruation so that there is less opportunity for them to "sin" and shame their families' honor. Thus, virginity is mandatory for brides at their first marriage. Marriage at such a young age also makes it easier for the husband, typically ten to twenty years older, to shape the girl to suit his wishes and to be obedient. This practice helps to keep the female subordinate to the male and thereby maintain order in patriarchal, Muslim society rather than chaos (Sabbah, 1984).

Thus, ideal beauty includes the body of adolescent girls and women in their early twenties, preferably a virgin. Even though it is illegal for a girl to marry before the age of 16 in Egypt, it is not difficult to obtain a document from a physician stating that a girl is 16, when she is, in fact, only 12. Many of the respondents complained about this custom. When President Sadāt's daughters were married at age 16, this both reflected and reinforced the traditional outlook. Ironically, Sadāt was the most Western-oriented ruler since 1952.

In Egypt, youth wears out very quickly. The majority of women look very haggard by the time they are 25. They would not be considered attractive or valuable as beauty objects much beyond this age. Poor diet, chronic health problems, multiple pregnancies, exposure to the relentlessly hot sun, hard physical labor for household and subsistence existence, caring for many children and other sick or dependent relatives, lack of adequate sleep, and constant anxiety and other emotional problems due to poverty and marital problems soon destroy the attractiveness of the youthful bride. Women experience a great deal of anxiety about their looks because they fear their husbands will marry another younger woman and/or divorce them if they lose their attractiveness. Most of the respondents voiced these concerns and some had, in fact, been divorced because their husbands preferred a younger woman.

The middle and upper classes fare better than the vast majority of women in maintaining their youthful appearance and avoiding some health problems; however, they may suffer other health problems due to lack of exercise, too much rich food, smoking cigarettes, and anxiety about physical and financial security in an increasingly unstable social, political, and economic climate. Certainly, they are able to afford cosmetics, visits to the beauty parlour, and more flattering, tailored clothing. It is not unusual now for middle class and upper class women to dye their hair to hide the grey. It has also become common for entertainers, whether actors, singers, or dancers, to undergo plastic surgery in Europe to maintain their youthful appearance well into old age. Some of the middle class respondents and most of the middle-aged upper-middle and upper class respondents did dye their hair, though the elderly ones did not. Most of them wore make-up and fashionable, Western clothing. While not all of these respondents were in poor health, they were concerned about their physical appearance and health. Some had a weekly massage at their private country club because they believed it would maintain body tone and was a more attractive option for them than exercise. Many of the respondents in these classes smoked and suffered ill health as a result. The respondents who were *muḥaggabāt*, of course, did not wear make-up or Western clothes in public, but they suffered the same anxieties about maintaining their youthful appearance and attractiveness, at least for their husbands; these respondents also did not smoke. Without exception, the diet of respondents in these classes was too salty and too sweet, and several suffered severe health problems, including diabetes, as a result.

Generally, though, the respondents did not believe that menopausal women should try to look young, beautiful, or like sex objects. Respondents explained that it would be extremely unlikely that a poor woman would attempt to do this, but more likely for upper class women. Middle class women are split: some would do this, some would like to do this but cannot afford it, and others would be ideologically opposed to it on religious grounds (Jews, Christians and

Muslims alike). Older women who tried to alter their looks were generally criticized by the respondents for "not acting their age". The elderly *baladī* and lower class respondents wore traditional dress, dark colors, did not dye their hair nor wear make-up. In contract, the upper-middle and upper class elderly respondents wore fashionable, Western clothing. One wore make-up and tinted her hair while the other did not.

Women in their forties were not considered sexually attractive by the respondents, but three ads depicted women in their forties as sex objects.[4] Six different billboard ads for a movie called "*Khamsah Bāb*" ("The Five Doors"), an Egyptian remake of "Irma Laduce" but set in Egypt during the 1940's, depicted the actress Nadia al-Gindī as if she were in her early thirties, when in fact she is certainly in her fifties.[5] Three ads pictured famous women who were actually in their 60's and 70's.[6] In one of these ads (photo #28), Sharīfa Fadl, looks mid-fortyish, though most of the respondents told me that she, like Nadia al-Gindī, has also had plastic surgery, and has never been beautiful. Most of the respondents thought that she should stop singing and "act her age". In another billboard ad (photo #26), the famous Algerian singer named Warda, who has lived in Egypt for over thirty years, looks fortyish. Many of the respondents told me that she had plastic surgery in France and actually looks much better now than when she was in her mid-thirties. Interestingly, none of the respondents said that Warda should stop singing and "act her age". This seems to be due to the pattern of respondents being negative in general about personalities whom they disliked, such as Sharīfa Fadl, and being positive in general about those whom they liked, such as Warda.

The eldest of the three women depicted in billboard ads, Samīha ‘Ayyūb, is a famous stage actress who plays the part of the *Khadīwīs* (Khedive or Viceroy) mistress in a historical play at the government-run Bālūn theatre. She was in her seventies, but appeared to look fortyish in the billboard ad (photos #15-16). Many of the respondents were disgusted that she would play the mistress because she was too old for such a part. They felt that this would be unbelievable to have a seventy year old grandmother play the part of a young lover. Some women thought it was immoral for her to play such a part, regardless of her age, but that her age made it worse because "she should know better". Elderly people are not depicted in Pharaonic art and there is little evidence from which to ascertain the treatment of elderly women in ancient Egypt, but in the Middle Eastern Islamic tradition, post-menopausal women would not be considered sex objects. Thus, the respondents' reactions would be typical of the Egyptian norm for at least the last thirteen hundred years.

As reflected in respondents' comments, Egyptian women have a very different status after menopause. They cease to be objects of sexual interest to men and have less social value because of their loss of reproductive capacity, lower productive capacity economically even within the household, and general infirmity. Respondents reported that the majority of Egyptians do not want to live much beyond age forty-five. Life expectancy is often used as an indication of quality of life, though in Egypt this is deceptive, due to great class inequalities.[7] By the time most women are forty, they suffer chronic poor health so much that death is often welcomed. Not only the respondents, but many physicians explained that aging in Egypt means suffering. As many of the respondents said, they believe that there is nothing left to live for, that they have experienced the best they can in life and that only the worst is waiting for them. These views are held by all groups and classes, though many in the upper class and a growing minority of the middle class who are becoming more interested in prolonging their lives and their youthful appearance. Their views and habits in this regard are more similar to Westerners than Egyptians. These women read Western beauty and fashion magazines, buy Western cosmetics and hair products, take Western drugs and undergo Western plastic surgical procedures, and so on to try to preserve their youthful looks. While many of the middle and most of the upper and upper-middle class respondents did use Western drugs, cosmetics, soap, and hair products as well as read Western-style Egyptian magazines, none of them had plastic surgery, though they did know of individuals who had done so. Such practices, however, were generally condemned by respondents from the lower and lower-middle classes as unIslamic.

B. Skin Color: Ethnicity and Race

Egyptians vary in skin shade from being as "white" as Northern Europeans to as "black" as some Africans.[8] There are regional and ethnic differences in skin shade. Nubians, a distinct minority ethnic and racial group originally from the south, or Upper Egypt, are the darkest. *Sa'īdīs*, also from Upper Egypt, are significantly lighter than Nubians, but still browner than Egyptians to the north. Both Nubians and *Sa'īdī s* claim to be the "original" Egyptians, descendants of the ancient Egyptians. Northerners, those from the Delta provinces of Lower Egypt, tend to be the lightest. Since ancient times, foreigners from neighboring states as well as from Europe have worked and settled in the Delta; thus, they are the most "mixed" population in Egypt. There are several different Arabic-speaking bedouin tribes located in oases and deserts throughout Egypt, including *Sinā'ī* Their skin color tends to be less white than many northern town-dwellers and much lighter than Nubians, close to the average and most common for Egyptians. In general, most Egyptians are significantly browner than Northern Europeans. These distinctions are much the same today as in Pharaonic art four thousand years ago. The idealized (white) skin color, however, is one that most Egyptians cannot match today any more than they could in Pharaonic times.

It is noteworthy that none of the images of women depicted on billboards included a Nubian woman, though one male Nubian singer appeared in one film ad. There was only one image of a *Sa'īdī* woman -- in one of the family planning ads. Seven billboards and four posters depicted images of women whose skin color was close to that of the typical "Egyptian" woman, including the one *Sa'īdī* and the woman in the Coke ad. Two other billboards depicted unknown women whose skin color was only slightly lighter than that of the typical "Egyptian" woman, as well as others of six well-known women. Four other billboard ads depicted images of women from the imagination of the artists, without clear features but with almost paper-white skin. Another was of a very Western-looking woman, also very white, but not a known personality. Finally, ten well-known women were depicted on billboards with very white skin; in fact, these actors, singers, and dancers were very white. Thus, the billboards depicted primarily images of the idealized white beauty, leaving the vast majority of Egyptian women unrepresented and rendering them invisible.

The idealized Egyptian beauty is well summarized by Respondent #19 (a middle-aged, Western university-educated, upper-middle class professional):

> The woman's face is very white. Beauty in the eyes of an Egyptian here is connoted with being white. If she is white, she is beautiful. So you will notice that most advertisements will show that the woman is white, although most Egyptian women are not white...*Zay 'amīr*, white and round. If you have a white, round face, you are pretty in Egypt. This is dominant here. This is the concept of beauty, both from the point of view of women and men. If you ask any brunette, if she had the choice, she would want to be white. I don't have any references to support what I am going to say, but off the cuff, I would say in way of possible explanation, that we have been under the Ottoman Empire for a long time. Their women are very white and they have been viewed as symbols of beauty. This could be the source of this ideal. You could hear someone say that in spite of the fact that she is brunette, she is very pretty. The analogy with the moon means white and round and this is the symbol for feminine beauty. It is very widespread in Egypt, amongst all social classes and parts of the country. No one in Egypt would disagree with this idea of beauty. (For photo #3)

Comments of respondents about the images of women in billboard ads reflected the importance of skin color and ethnicity in their conceptualization of the ideal beauty. The following comments about women depicted in billboard ads are typical of what all the respondents reported and reflect the ever-present Egyptian consciousness of skin color and Egyptian identity:

> Her face is not blonde, and her hair is dark. Maybe she looks like Su'ād Husnī, an actor, Egyptian actress. Yeah, she could be Egyptian, because her face is not blonde, not white. (Respondent #20 for photo #1)
>
> She's [Laila 'Alwī] very beautiful, also. She's different from other actresses. She has yellow hair, green eyes; she is very blonde and white. (Respondent #11 for photo #27)
>
> She [Laila 'Alwī] is not pure Egyptian, you know. I heard that her mother is Greek or some other European. She is very white. She is *hilwah*, very beautiful. (Respondent #37 for photo #27)
>
> He [Muhammad Munīr] is a special kind of singer here in Egypt because he sings songs of the South, what we call an-Nūba...People there are dark, black or very brown. As you see, he is very brown here. (Respondent #1 for photo #23)
>
> He is not ashamed to say what he is, a Nubian. (Respondent #51 for photo #23)
>
> [There are two pictures] because this on the left is...Upper Egypt and...so they have dark tint and this [one] on the left is the other side of the country. On the right is Upper Egypt and this on the left is the -- like Mansūrah, Tantā, al-Bahrī, the *fallmahīn*, the peasants. People would recognize the differences because of the tint [skin color]. People in Upper Egypt are browner, *yānī*. (Respondent #12 for photo #18)

Another interesting component of the notion of idealized skin color being white, as explained by respondents, is that it is much more important for women than for men to be white. White skin is considered beautiful and part of the idealized image of the beautiful woman, the objectified genetic beauty.[9] Throughout Egyptian history, wealthy men have preferred to marry light-skinned women; and white female slaves from Eastern Europe (*al-jawārī*), used primarily as entertainers and sex objects, have always been the most highly valued concubines. This is in contrast to black African slaves who were used for menial work. (Mernīssī, 1993a; Walther, 1993) The slave trade in Egypt was officially ended early in the British occupation, but Egyptians still refer to blacks as "slaves" (*'abd/'abīd*). Skin color, then, also carries connotations of being rich or poor as well as being beautiful or ugly. The respondents expressed great concern about skin color. Even the Nubian respondents preferred to have a light-skinned husband and children. The *baladī* and poor *Sa'īdī* respondents related stories about the fears of villagers having a dark-skinned daughter because she may not find a husband.

Given a choice, preference is for lighter skin color for both men and women; but because men are objectified as success objects for their ability to be good breadwinners rather than as beauty objects, skin color is of lesser importance than factors associated with power and wealth. In other words, the status, power, prestige, and success of men are dependent upon their being successful breadwinners for their wives and children; whereas for women, it is their physical beauty, youthfulness, fertility, and ability to bear and raise sons which determines their status, power, and prestige since women's primary roles are as mother, wife, and housekeeper. This conceptualization of gender in Egypt is no different than what it has been in the West since ancient Greek societies became patriarchal; however, there has been a serious challenge to the essentialist and/or sociobiologist assumptions in the West, whereas this has not occurred in Egypt.

There is a class dimension to this as well. Individuals who have to work outside are much darker than those who work indoors all day. Therefore, men who have lighter skin tones tend to be associated with higher status and greater wealth than those who are darker. A very dark rich man would be a less desirable husband for a rich light skinned woman; hence, such a man would have to be significantly richer than the woman or he would have to settle for a darker skinned bride. These are the trade-offs, then, in the marriage market. Even in Pharaonic art, high status men are depicted as lighter in skin color than those of low status (Robins, 1993; Tyldesley, 1994). Thus, the disdain for manual work, and hence its low status, and its linkage to skin color is an ancient Egyptian norm which is still deeply embedded in the collective unconscious.

C. Body Size and Shape

Because skin color is only one of many physical attributes important for identifying beauty in Egypt, most of the respondents did not refer only to skin color when commenting on a woman's beauty. Besides skin color and ethnicity, body size and shape are very important in Egypt. Twenty-five of the photographs of billboards depicted women whose weight would be considered normal in the West. That is, they were not fat, not plump, and not skinny. They were heavier than the typical image of women in Western advertisements and much heavier than the skinny models seen in Western fashion magazines. In short, they looked like healthy women who did not have any weight problems. While the majority of respondents believed that this was an ideal weight for women, these images of women would be, however, thinner than the Egyptian norm for ideal body weight. They were, however, somewhat heavier than the Pharaonic ideal.

Three billboards depicted women who could be described as "pleasantly plump". While they are not obese, they would be considered about twenty pounds overweight in the West, though not in Egypt. They were considered within the "normal" range by the respondents. Two photographs depicted different images of women: one billboard with a fat woman and one billboard with a "normal" healthy woman by Western standards as described above. One billboard depicted both a fat woman and two young adolescent girls who would be considered normal weight in the West but too thin in Egypt. Most of the respondents believed that the fat woman was supposed to depict a *mu'allimah* (middle-aged peasant businesswoman) and the young girls as poor, uneducated *baladī*(poor, low class urban) adolescents who have been lured into prostitution. Finally, one billboard (photo #13) depicted a caricature of an actress, Samāh 'Anwār, with an hourglass figure who appeared very thin in the torso with overly large, protruding breasts, large buttocks, and thick legs. Her large head covered 50% of the woman's entire height. This cartoon-style depiction seems to blend Western and Egyptian conceptions of beauty, except for the enlarged head, of course. On the whole, all the images of women depicted in billboards were rounded and healthy, not skinny or fat; nevertheless, they did not meet the Pharaonic ideal, the Western ideal, nor the current Egyptian ideal.

A billboard ad (photo #27) of Laila 'Alwī, an actress who typifies the Egyptian norm of obese beauty, elicited a variety of revealing comments about body size, indicating widespread agreement amongst respondents regardless of age, ethnicity, religion, regional origin, education, and class:

> She is very fat, but in Egypt fat women are so popular. (Respondent #4)
>
> She is fat. I think many Egyptians like her, but I don't. Men like fat women. (Respondent #5)
>
> She's very fat, a *gāmūsah* (water buffalo) Her face is very beautiful, though. (Respondent #28)
>
> I like Laila 'Alwī very much. I call her "Pussy Cat". Her face is beautiful and very expressive, but she is quite fat. (Respondent #42)
>
> Laila 'Alwī is very fat and people like her very much. They believe she is very sexy. They admire her a lot...She is beautiful. (Respondent #25)
>
> She sings and dances and shows a lot of flesh. She's not vulgar, but she fits a certain type of beauty which is what the masses like. She's very fat, but this is liked in society...She has a beautiful face. (Respondent #51)

These comments express both recognition as well as acceptance or rejection of Egyptian norms for the ideal female body by the respondents.

The general body size and shape of respondents themselves varied considerably. Many respondents spoke about their own bodies, how they felt about themselves vis-à-vis the idealized beauty norm. Those who were very thin by Western standards were very conscious of their thinness and desperately wanted to be fatter. In fact, one of them felt that this was the major reason for her not having a husband. Some of the grossly obese women wanted to lose weight, but were unwilling to change their diet or engage in more exercise. Interestingly, the middle and upper class women who were overweight by Western standards wanted to loose weight, but those from the lower classes were proud of their weight, perhaps indicating a movement away from Egyptian norms by the relatively privileged and a stronger adherence to Egyptian norms by the underprivileged because it gave them more social status.

Interestingly, most of the respondents did not want to be fat until after their marriage. It is common for middle and upper class girls to be very thin in their late teens and early twenties when they are looking for a spouse; indeed, eating disorders like anorexia nervosa and bulimia are becoming a serious problem. Given their predilection for reading bridal magazines modeled on Western ones, they seem to have internalized the Western notion of the thin bride being ideal. Though this is not a concern of the poor, with increased poverty and malnutrition, most young women are thin even though they would prefer to be fat.

Contrary to the idealized beauty image of obesity in Egypt, most of the respondents believed that women should not be obese, even though they believed that Egyptian men preferred obese women.[10] Nevertheless, the women did not think that slender women are feminine and they did not want to be thin. This was true even for some of the women who were thin. Very few of the women interviewed felt that it was better to be thin than fat. Those who did said that it is unhealthy to be obese. Thinness is associated with poverty in Egypt. There is a strong association between being rich and being fat. Just as Egyptians force feed ducks to fatten them up, so, too, do they force feed children because it is considered shameful for middle and upper class families to have thin children. Thus, obesity amongst children of the middle and upper classes is common and is a very evident marker of their class status. This was not the case in ancient Egypt, where women were always depicted as relatively slender. Only the occasional rich male bureaucrat was depicted with a bulging belly in Pharaonic art. There was consensus amongst the respondents that Western women are much thinner than Egyptian women, and also that Western women are thinner than the ideal weight in Egypt. "Plump" was the ideal of most of the women interviewed. They considered women depicted in Pharaonic art to be "too thin". Thus, the respondents fell between the ancient Egyptian ideal and the current Egyptian ideal of women's weight and body shape in terms of what they expressed to be the ideal: plump.

Besides being round and white, the respondents said that women should be short. Egyptian men and women are generally shorter than Westerners, though not as short as most Orientals. Thus, standing five feet three or four inches tall would be the ideal for Egyptian women. Though there are some women who stand five feet eight to ten inches tall, they would not be considered feminine. It is interesting to note that Egyptians refer to tall women as "big", which would be a derogatory description of a woman. They do not, however, refer to obese women as "big". In fact, most of the women believed that it is too mannish for a woman to be tall, regardless of a woman's other characteristics. The respondents themselves were reflective of the Egyptian population in terms of height.

Many of the respondents criticized Fīfī 'Abdū (photos #32, #34, #35), a belly dancer and actor depicted in some of the billboards, because at 5'10", she is "too tall". There was also consensus amongst the respondents that women should be shorter than their husbands, also an Egyptian norm related to the belief that women should be subordinate to their husbands in every way.

> She [Fīfī 'Abdū] is also bigger than Egyptian women, very, very tall, very unusual, *yănī.* Here in Egypt, women are very short. You must have noticed, even our men are short, shorter than you. (Rspondent #18 for photo #35)

> She [Fīfī 'Abdū] is very big, very tall. She is unusual here in Egypt because she is so big (tall). For a belly dancer, this is strange. (Respondent #33 for photo 35)

In addition to being generally plump, respondents frequently remarked that most Egyptian women have thick legs, although there is some variation amongst the Egyptian population in terms of leg thickness. In general, respondents explained that fat legs are idealized in Egypt, though some respondents felt that the thin legs of European women are more beautiful. While most of the women interviewed believed that European women tended to be too thin, some seemed to envy the thinner legs of Europeans. Pharaonic art depicted women with rather thick, though not grossly fat, legs, probably reflecting the Egyptian genetic propensity for thick legs. Even so, they were thinner than the current ideal. Here, the respondents' concept of ideal leg shape fell closer to the Pharaonic ideal than to the current one.

One billboard ad (photo #2) for stockings depicting women's legs upside-down in a fan-like arrangement triggered a torrent of comments from respondents about female bodies, Egyptian versus foreign legs, the exposure of body parts such as legs, whether the legs were "real" or plastic, and the quality and character of advertising in Egypt vis-à-vis the West.

> This one is obviously an attempt to imitate Western advertising, but you can see how poor it is. Yes, the legs are shorter and fatter because Egyptians are like this, *yănī*...Maybe some Egyptians who like to imitate Europeans would like it, think that it is *chic*, sophisticated, sort of. (Respondent #17)

> These legs are plastic. No woman has these curves in their legs like this. Women don't have legs like this, at least not in Egypt. (Respondent #47)

> This is a good ad. It's classical, traditional. I saw ads like this in France. This design is good. I like it. (Respondent #51)

Although this particular ad (photo #2) was for socks and underwear as well as stockings, only stockings are depicted. While there is a strong social taboo against revealing adult underwear, depicting legs above the knee is also forbidden for both males and females in Islam, and a custom also followed by Christians and Jews in Egypt. Most respondents were outraged about the use of dismembered body parts for commercial advertising, particularly upside-down, uncovered legs and buttocks in a billboard ad. They said that the entire woman should be shown, standing upright and decently dressed. The upside-down depiction of legs was interpreted as degrading, humiliating, and objectifying to women. Even the most liberal respondents also believed that it was not only entirely unnecessary, but also degrading to women, and even immoral, to reveal legs above the knee.

> Ethics are deteriorating for everything. They just want to see and show everything, and they don't care if you are uncomfortable or embarrassed. (Respondent #4)

> This one is also obscene and disgusting. I hate to see body parts like this, dismembered women displayed to sell things. Again, women are used as sex objects to be consumed by men. This, of course, it attracts the attention of men. Would you ever see a woman displaying her entire leg, *yānī*, from the hip, like this? This is a *double entendre* meaning, like the "Blanco" ad (Respondent #3 for photo #21)

> I think it is wrong [to use women's dismembered body parts to sell commodities]. I know this is commonly done in the West, but it is wrong, even in the West, it is wrong. They are showing something forbidden, putting it up in the streets for all to see. It is not moral, not true to any religion. Women are not just body parts; they are people! Women should not be used to attract people's attention to products. Anyway, this is mostly to attract men. In Islam, it is forbidden even to reproduce a person's face because no one can match the work of God. Yes, this is clearly wrong. It is contributing to moral decay so evident in Egyptian society today. Probably this was done by Muslim men! (Respondent #17)

The *muhaggabāt* and traditional Coptic respondents believed that no part of the leg should be revealed for any reason and so were completely against this ad.

> Women's legs are not supposed to be seen by anybody but her husband. Most men do not see a woman's legs until after they are married, *yānī*. Legs are private. Even men's legs are not shown to anybody. No Egyptian man would wear short trousers, let alone shorts! This is for foreigners, people who are not Egyptian and not Muslim. Even Christian men in Egypt would never wear short trousers. This is just foreign to our culture in Egypt. (Respondent #17)

As these comments clearly indicate, most respondents expressed disgust at the exposure of legs for commercial purposes. While many of the respondents based their objections on religious beliefs that women's legs should never be exposed, many also objected to the objectification and dismemberment of women's body parts, particularly for commercial purposes.

Related to body shape and weight are the size of women's breasts, which are currently supposed to be very large and round but firm, commonly felt to be correlated with a woman being "...an inexhaustible source of tenderness and high intelligence" (Sabbah, 1984:25). While this is a common physique in Egypt, there are also women in all classes and groups who have rather small breasts. It is clear that the breast size of respondents themselves varied significantly, but those with small breasts wished that they had larger breasts. Nevertheless, large breasts are idealized and symbolic of women's status and roles as sex objects and nurturing mothers.[11] Egyptian women generally breastfeed their children until they are nearly three years old.

Women's breasts were not prominently featured in billboard ads. In fact, they were only discernable in nineteen. In seven ads, the women were wearing large, loose clothing which gives the impression that their breasts are very large. In ten ads, women are presented with medium-sized breasts, though they are not clearly discernable. Only two ads depicted women wearing tight clothing, with large, very prominent breasts; respondents reacted the most negatively towards one (photo #21) but not the other (photo #13). Ironically, the caricature of Samāh 'Anwār with large, bulging breasts was so atypical of this particular actress, both in terms of her own physique and in terms of her roles, that respondents could not take the ad (photo #13) seriously.

> One thing that bothers me, though is how they make the focus on big breasts for the woman. This is to attract men, but I think this is wrong. People should see the play because it is funny, witty, interesting, clever, not to look at women's breasts! (Respondent #16)
>
> This picture illustrates that it is a comedy, so I think it is effective...[but] Samāh 'Anwār is shown in a very atypical way here. Usually, she wears trousers and jackets, more like a man. She has a very thin body and it is sort of girlish or mannish. She does not have large breasts as portrayed here. I know this is a caricature, but it is out of character for her. (Respondent #3)

Respondents did not believe it is acceptable for women's breasts to be discernable in advertisements nor prominent in the everyday attire of ordinary women. *Muhaggabāt* women wear long outer garments which obscure the body shape and hide the breasts. Most of the respondents believed that the ideal breast size should be somewhat smaller than the societal ideal and certainly not as pendulous. They believed, however, that breasts should be significantly larger than as depicted in Pharaonic art, which was, in fact, generally small.

D. Face: Size, Shape, and Features

While respondents reported that body size and shape were indicative of being Egyptian or foreign, it was in describing the ideal face that respondents drew sharp contrasts between Egyptian and foreign identities. An Egyptian woman's face should be round, short, with medium-sized nose, large eyes, long eyelashes, and a small, red, smiling mouth. Idealized beautiful faces are compared to the moon (*'amūrah*) and also to a cat's face (*[q]uttah*). Oval and heart-shaped faces are not as beautiful as round ones, but they are preferable to long, thin ones, which are considered foreign. The nose should not be too thin or "sharp" or too long, as this is associated with being European -- but neither should it be flat or too broad, as this is associated with being negroid and African. A large mouth would be considered very unfeminine because of undesirable sexual connotations.[12] Furthermore, the mouth should be closed as an open mouth indicates seduction, immorality, and sexual provocativeness (Sabbah, 1984). The eyes, however, should be large, but not too large or they would be considered Pharaonic. The respondents, like Egyptians in general, are somewhat afraid of ancient Egyptians, and many of the respondents considered the ancient Egyptians to be "foreign". Even respondents who considered the ancient Egyptians to be Egyptian made the distinction between ancient and modern. This is reflected in their opinions about billboard images which reflect Pharaonic motifs, particularly regarding women's faces.

Most respondents believed that the unknown woman depicted in the billboard ad for contact lenses (photo #9) was entirely Pharaonic and/or Oriental. These identities were generally considered not only foreign, but negative identities by the respondents, as evidenced in the following comments:

> She is beautiful like Cleopatra -- her eyes. It shows us the eyes. Yes, her eyes [are Pharaonic]. Even her hair is like Pharaoh...She looks like Cleopatra. (Respondent #20) [Her body language and facial expression expressed disapproval]

> Is this a Pharaonic picture? Is she supposed to be Cleopatra? Why are they using a Pharaonic woman now to advertise this product? The eye lashes are long and the *kuhl* (kohl eye liner) is Pharaonic....This woman is very beautiful, even if she is Pharaonic. (Respondent #29)

> She does not look Egyptian at all and she is not attractive...I think she must be Oriental or maybe even Pharaonic, but I don't know why they would use such a face. (Respondent #21)

> She's pretty, but I'm not sure she is Egyptian. She may be from the Far East. Yes, [Pharaonic] because of the hair and the large eyes. Her nose is funny. It's too big and not very nice. (Respondent #34)

> Her face is really weird. Her eyebrows looks Chinese, but at the same time she looks like a Pharaonic woman. The dark eyebrows and the haircut , especially the fringe. Her features look Pharaonic. (Respondent #17)

> She doesn't even look Egyptian! Maybe she is Japanese? From her hair, she looks Asian. Her eyes and eyebrows look Pharaonic. Maybe her hair is Pharaonic, too. Yes, maybe she is supposed to be Pharaonic, but she looks Asian, too. (Respondent #16)

> She has a nice face and is even beautiful, but she looks Japanese. Her features look Japanese and her hairstyle, but not the eyes. Her eyes look Pharaonic, but nothing else about her looks Pharaonic. (Respondent #40)

Although none of the respondents thought that the woman depicted in this billboard ad (photo #9) looked like a typical Egyptian, their observations highlight what they see to be characteristic Egyptian facial features and hair.

Interestingly, the fact that the woman depicted in this billboard ad (photo #9) was shown using blue contact lenses triggered a number of comments from the respondents about eye color, as well as about the Western habit of wearing contact lenses. Even though most Egyptian women have brown eyes, having "colored" (e.g., any color except brown) eyes is generally considered more beautiful in Egypt.

> This is the dream of all women, all of a sudden you have "colored" eyes. This is one of the beauty ideals here in Egypt. So even if you don't need correcting eye deficiencies, you can wear colored lenses like make-up, like changing the color of your hair. Some people asked me where I get colored lenses, but, in fact, my eyes are naturally hazel. People are always asking me about this because they think my eyes are beautiful in color. (Respondent #26)

> No, no [Egyptian women do not wear contact lenses]. Little, very little, and most of them are artists -- actresses, artists, dancers. It's very common among them. Many of them change the color of their eyes as a cosmetic use of the lenses, not for corrective use of the reflection. They use mostly blue or green, but most of the women using these are white or blonde so that the color of the lenses suits them...You know, I used contact lenses, but for correction of reflection because I am myopic...and...because I got tired of the glasses on my nose...So I...put contact lenses [on] since about five years...I have a friend who [wears colored contact lenses]...She changed the color

> of her eyes...using contact lenses. This change is good. It suits her and she is very beautiful. I like this on her. (Respondent #11 for photo #9)

Even though the respondents often conceded that some Egyptian women did wear contact lenses only to change their eye color from brown to "colored", they objected to this practice because they believed that brown eyes are beautiful. Most of them believed that wearing "colored" contact lenses to change eye color is not acceptable. Indeed, most believed that wearing contact lenses, even clear ones, was not a good idea, especially in Egypt because of the dust and difficulty keeping them clean; but most women also believed that it was not healthy for the eyes to use contact lenses. Only one woman had actually worn contact lenses, but she had thrown them away because she believed that they were not healthy for her eyes and that they were too much trouble to keep clean. Aside from the health reasons, most women also believed that it was wrong to be dissatisfied with what one has been given by God. Thus, wearing "colored" contact lenses was likened with/to challenging God's judgement and interpreted as being sacrilegious. The women all considered contact lenses to be foreign and Western, and their use by Egyptians as imitating Westerners, the *kh̲awāgah* complex. Nevertheless, the strong preference for "colored eyes" being more beautiful than brown eyes reflected the over-all Europeanized conception of the ideal beauty in Egypt.[13]

E. Hair: Color, Type, Length, and Style

As with the face, the respondents had definite ideas about what type of hair and hair-style constitutes the ideal beauty image, and also as a basis for distinguishing between Egyptian versus foreign identity. The respondents believed that Egyptian women should also have long, straight, black hair which should always be tidy and tied back or covered; however, the ears must always be covered. "Wild", "messy", "bushy", "kinky", "curly" hair is not considered feminine. In fact, the modern Egyptian disdain for bushy hairdos and for Pharaonic images in general is captured in the comments made by many of the respondents about the image of a woman depicted in one particular billboard ad (photo #9), as evidenced in the following remarks:

> It looks like the Pharaohs. The hair-style, straight cut on the front is Pharaonic. What do you call this? (Fringe) Also, the ears showing like this. We don't do this. We don't put our hair to the back of our ears. (Respondent #25: young, university-educated, middle class)
>
> This is awful. It looks Pharaonic. They should have got Nefertiti herself; it should have been better. This face is not beautiful at all. The eyebrows and the hair curling down like this around her face is very Pharaonic. (Respondent #28: young, high school-educated, lower-middle class)
>
> I don't like her hairdo. This hairdo doesn't suit her. Maybe if it's less bushy, if it's straighter, it would be better. (Respondent #13 for photo #28)

Even though many entertainers dye their hair (from dark brown or black to a very light color), as do some middle class Egyptian women nowadays, most of the women interviewed disapproved very strongly and none of them dyed their hair (except to cover up the grey). The national concept of feminine beauty privileges red hair, though blonde hair is also considered more beautiful than black hair. The following comment is typical of those made by respondents about hair in the idealized beauty image, and its distance from the physical reality of most Egyptian women:

> I just noticed she has yellow hair...This is fit into this beauty ideal of being blonde, one of the main attributes of a beautiful woman, *yǎnī*, because most of us have dark hair. She has straight hair, fair skin, and most of us have dark hair and curly hair and dark skin. (Respondent #26 for photo #21)

A very small percentage of women in Egypt have red hair and even fewer have blonde hair. Brown hair is much more common than red or blond hair, but much less common than black hair. Although brown hair is less desirable than red or blonde hair, it is still preferred over black hair. The use of henna, however, is very common in Egypt, particularly for festive and other special occasions, a habit extending back to Pharaonic days. Henna brings out the reddish and auburn highlights present even in black hair. It was used on occasion by almost all the respondents.

> Yes, she is Egyptian, and she is very beautiful. The hairstyle is very nice, but parts of her hair are very dark and some are light, so she must dye her hair. Everybody has their own way. It doesn't bother me at all [if she dyes her hair]. If older people want to dye out the white hair or young girls dye their hair red, that's ok with me. No one does this in Upper Egypt, but I see people doing this here in Cairo. It doesn't bother me, anyway. In Upper Egypt, they are very conservative and they do not have fancy hairstyles, use make-up, or dye their hair color or eye color. If I saw someone like this before, I would stop and look at her in amazement. After living in Cairo, I got used to it. Now, I don't care. It doesn't bother me. (Respondent #31 for photo #10)

> I heard that some young women try to imitate Laila 'Alwī in her hairdos and...I think she dyes her hair, too. I don't like this. I think her hairdos are ok, but not the dying. (Respondent #28 for photo #27)

> ...It's very common among them [actresses, artists, dancers]...[to] change the color of their hair...to change the whole look of their face...I have a friend who...is not white or blonde...[S]he changed the color of her hair from black to golden brown. This change is good. It suits her and she is very beautiful. I like this on her. (Respondent #11for photo #9)

Since the idealized hair and hairstyles are almost unobtainable for most Egyptian women, a second level ideal which is more easily attained, exists, consisting of long, thick, heavy, relatively straight, full-bodied but not bushy black hair, as expressed by one respondent:

> ...I like her hair. I like long hair, long and heavy. And her hairdressing, leaving it like that, I like it. (Respondent #11 for photo #10)

Like every other aspect of being female, the hair must be orderly and under tight control, as evidenced in the following remarks:

> I don't like her hairdo. This hairdo doesn't suit her. Maybe if it's less bushy, if it's straighter, it would be better. (Respondent #13 for photo #28)

> I hate her hairstyle here. It is not nice. It is wild and not good. It is also not suitable for her age at

> all. This hairstyle is for young women 16 or 17 only. (Respondent #50 for photo #26)

> For myself, I do not like her hairstyle. It is too messy and seems to be all different lengths. (Respondent #5 for photo #8)

Short hair is still considered "mannish" and not acceptable for women, even though collar-length hair is becoming increasingly common amongst middle class women. There is a generalized tension between idealizing and rejecting "Europeanness", probably reflecting their love-hate relationship with their old colonial masters, the British, and their attraction and preference for the French, the traditional enemies of the British. Most Egyptian women have very thick and curly hair. Tightly curled, kinky hair is also very common. However, the idealized norm for women's beautiful hair is that it be long and straight. Most Egyptian women have to work very hard to change their hair from its natural state to meet the ideal. This varies significantly from the Pharaonic custom of having many quite different hairstyles and wigs, including very bushy and frizzy ones.

F. The Body: Egyptian or Foreign?

As many of the comments above indicate, the respondents frequently made distinctions between what was Egyptian and what was foreign about the women depicted in billboard ads. They commented that many of the women in these ads looked like foreigners because their bodies did not fit the Egyptian ideal, and/or their facial features were not Egyptian, and/or because their hair was not black. The following quotations provide examples of how the respondents conceptualized Egyptian versus foreign, primarily Western or European, looks. Admiration and preference for European features over Egyptian ones is evident in many of them. It is also evident that many aspects of a woman's physical body were combined to determine identity as Egyptian or foreign.

The first set of comments refers to the woman being a foreigner if she does not have brown eyes:

> I think she could be Egyptian, but she also looks French. Her eyes are colored. See, they are blue. (Respondent #4 for photo #4)

> I guess she is not Egyptian – blue eyes! They may use pictures from magazines. You know, sometimes you see ads where they took the woman's face from a foreign magazine and they reprint it. (Respondent #25 for photo #4)

Most respondents, however, included references to the woman's features in general, the shape of the face, and the skin color when trying to determine whether the women depicted in the billboards were Egyptian or foreign:

> Her features are not Egyptian at all. Her nose and mouth are definitely not Egyptian. (Respondent #33 for photo #4)

> A blue-eyed woman with different colored soap...She doesn't even look Egyptian -- neither her

> facial expression, her eyes, or her mouth, or even her nose. (Respondent #22 for photo #4)
>
> She is not Egyptian. She is European. I think she is Italian or maybe Spanish. (Respondent #48 for photo #4)
>
> Maybe [she's Egyptian], but I think she looks like [a] French one. They always use European women for such ads. I hate it. She is pretty, but many Egyptians are pretty, too. (Respondent #37 for photo #4)

Some respondents included references not only to facial features, but also to hair, hairstyle, and attire:

> I can't tell if she is Egyptian or foreign. Even though she has yellow hair and a foreign dress, I can't tell if she is a foreigner because I cannot see her features. She may be an Egyptian trying to look foreign. (Respondent #31for photo #21)
>
> This woman is not Egyptian at all. No Egyptian would wear clothes like this or have this kind of hairstyle. Her features...don't look Egyptian...Maybe they use a foreign woman to make us think that this is a foreign blanket. People prefer to buy foreign-made things rather than Egyptian ones. (Respondent #33 for photo #21)
>
> This is not a good painting, but she looks foreign. Egyptian women do not make their hair like this. Also, this woman has very straight hair, and it is too blonde for Egyptian one. (Respondent #18 for photo #21)

Two billboard ads for young, relatively unknown singers (photos #25 and #29) depicted these women with long, black hair, large brown eyes, and white skin, but their faces were long. Hence, most of the respondents believed that their features and faces looked foreign, one (#25) being probably Arab (in particular, Palestinian or Syrian) and the other (#29) more likely Maghrebi.[14] Respondents' comments about these two ads focus on the distinctions made between Egyptian and foreign features:

> She is also from Morocco. She is not Egyptian. She is not beautiful, and so she is not popular...She looks worse than this picture. She is more ugly than this in real life. She has a big mouth. Here they show her mouth as nice. In real, her mouth is not good. (Respondent #49 for photo #29)
>
> This woman is not Egyptian, though. I think she is Algerian, but I am not sure, maybe Syrian. I saw her on t.v., but she looks like a bedouin from the mountains, Syrian or Lebanese. She is pretty, but not like Egyptians. (Respondent #43 for photo #29)
>
> She has these Arabian features, the sharp nose and big eyes and dark black hair. She could be Egyptian. You know Arabs by their dark hair, you know, very dark hair. (Respondent #25 for photo #25)
>
> ...[S]he looks foreign, maybe Maghrebi. She could be Egyptian, but her face is too long. I don't like her hairstyle. (Respondent #4 for photo #25)
>
> This woman is not beautiful. Her hairstyle is too wild. Her features are too big. It's a long face. She looks Egyptian but her face is too long. I don't like looking at her face. It doesn't look

> comfortable. (Respondent #27 for photo #25)
>
> This picture looks like her, but it may be old because now her hair is short and she seems to have changed her face. Maybe they did some surgery on her face so it wouldn't seem so long. Nadia Rushdī is ok, but she's not well known. She is pretty. I don't think she is Egyptian, though. Maybe she is from Lebanon. (Respondent #29 for photo #25)

Finally, respondents included body size and shape to determine whether the woman was Egyptian or foreign. The thinness of one woman depicted in a billboard ad (#12) was the deciding factor for identifying her as a foreigner by some respondents, even though she is a well-known Egyptian actress, whereas the fat legs and body of another woman (photo #21) identified her as an Egyptian:

> She was not very beautiful. She was very, very, very, very thin. I mean she was not beautiful at all! Now she gained weight and she looks very beautiful and I think she is getting more beautiful day by day. (Respondent #11 for photo #12)
>
> I think she is Egyptian, but I can't tell because this is not clear. She has fat legs, though. I think Egyptians have fatter legs than foreigners. Her body looks fat, too. (Respondent #48 for photo #21)

Some respondents went even further in identifying the woman depicted in one billboard ad (photo #4) as a foreigner by complaining that not only the woman, but the entire ad itself, was probably a European ad or a poor local rendition of it:

> No, her features are not Egyptian. She has blue eyes and her features are not Egyptian at all. It could be a French ad, copied from some foreign ad. Maybe they use the French name "Oui" and a French face to attract middle class people to use this Egyptian product. Otherwise, they would want to use a foreign soap. This may make them think it is imported, also. They are trying to give it this flair of being exclusive and foreign. (Respondent #26)
>
> This looks like an ad from America in the 1940's. She doesn't look Egyptian at all, of course. She has typical European features. (Respondent #52)
>
> She doesn't look Egyptian at all. She looks like a "Vogue" model from the 1940's in the U.S. I don't think it makes any difference to people, really. I think they cut this picture out from an American "Camay" ad and used it. This kind of publicity is foreign, anyway, so it doesn't make any difference if they copy other things in the advertising...I think the Egyptian woman likes make-up. (Respondent #51)

III. Conclusion

What is most interesting about respondents' conceptualization of the ideal female body is the overwhelming consensus on what constitutes the ideal beauty norm in Egyptian society, regardless of education, religion, ethnicity, region of origin, and class. Some respondents, however, did not accept this social norm, explaining that their own conceptualization of the ideal female body was very different, and in most cases, that this created problems for them within their families. There were some differences between respondents from the lower classes and those from the upper classes regarding body weight. Respondents from the lower and lower-middle class, as well as many from the middle class, desired to be fat, whether they were or not. Respondents from the upper class, many from the upper-middle class, and some from the middle class explained at great length why they were opposed to this norm of obesity, primarily for health reasons. Most of these respondents were physicians or scientists, indicating the salience of their education. Although some of these latter respondents were fat themselves, they wanted to be thinner. For some fat middle class respondents, this was a matter of great conflict within the family because their husband and/or relatives wanted them to remain fat. Some of the middle and many of the upper-middle and upper class women expressed strong preference for thin legs, contrary to the idealized Egyptian norm. Age did not appear to be relevant in respondents' views.

Regarding European facial features being idealized, most respondents accepted this norm, though they conceded that this was quite foreign to the reality of most Egyptians' features. Some nationalistic middle class respondents objected vociferously because they associated this with colonialism. There was almost unanimous consensus, however, on respondents' dislike for Pharaonic and Oriental features. Thus, class, education, and conceptualization of and allegiance to national identity seemed to affect some respondents' ideas about the ideal female body, but not age.

With regard to the billboard images of female entertainers -- actors, singers and dancers -- many of them combined both the negative and positive conceptions of women, which Chapters Five and Six also discuss in detail.[15] On the level of physical female beauty, the respondents emphasized the following traits as ideal: blonde, red, or brown hair; long, straight or loosely curled but not kinky hair; hazel, green, or blue eyes; large eyes; long, curled eyelashes; prominent, arched eyebrows; small, smiling, red mouth and white teeth; medium-sized nose; round, oval, or heart-shaped face; white skin; young and fertile; and short and plump body. Because the physical features of the ideal Egyptian beauty include some which are typical of Egyptian women and many which are not, there is an inherent contradiction and tension between what constitutes Egyptian versus foreign identity for women.

Although many of these ideal beauty traits reflect the features of foreigners who ruled Egypt in the past, it is significant that Egyptians have not accepted the idealized beauty image projected by Western mass media. Despite the virtual colonization of Egypt by the United States, Egyptians reject both the body and the idea behind the Western beauty. Respondents made it clear that they wanted to be fertile and healthy, and that this requires a well-fed body. They categorically rejected the Western ideal of a thin body and the ideas behind it, that women should be objects of men's sexual desires but not produce babies. Nevertheless, most of them were violating the Egyptian social norm which idealized obesity as a marker of wealth and fertility. While slenderness is over-determined in Western societies, obesity is over-determined in Egypt, as it is throughout the Middle East and Africa. (See Bordo, 1993). The respondents explained that it is not healthy to be obese and that this ideal probably has more to do with social status than health and fertility. Unlike their Western sisters, the respondents, like most Egyptians, do not feel conflicted about their bodies. While they do enhance their appearance with the use of make-up and accessories, as discussed in Chapter Five, they are not obsessed with changing their bodies.

The main focus of concern about the body expressed by the respondents is that of aging. Egyptians do not want to be old. For women, this is particularly salient because they believe that their value to their families and to society diminishes rapidly at menopause. Even so, respondents were horrified at the Western practice of plastic surgery, complaining bitterly that Egyptian entertainers have had such surgery. Thus, Egyptian women are very particular about their appearance, about covering the body but not about changing its size and shape. Since Egyptians love to eat, even those who are skinny do not have to punish their bodies.

As women's social practices have changed, so have their experiences with their bodies, opening up new possibilities (See Bordo, 1993:143). Substantial cultural differences exist between how Western and Egyptian women conceptualize gender, and hence the ideal body. While Western women are alienated from their bodies, Egyptian women are very much centered in their bodies. Respondents clearly emphasized not only their dislike of the male-defined norm idealizing female obesity in Egypt, but their rejection of it. Although the body can be a metaphor for culture, it can also be a direct locus of social control (*Ibid.*:165). The respondents in this study have made it clear that they were the ones who determined what is a normal body for a woman. They also rejected the patriarchal notion that the body should determine a woman's social role, as discussed in greater detail in Chapter Seven.

Chapter Four End Notes

1

Most of the women did, indeed, discuss their conceptualization of masculinity, though it was not as well developed as their discussion about femininity.

2

This includes images of women depicted on billboard ads in the following photographs #: 1, 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 18, 19 and probably 6 as well as 20.

3

This includes images of women depicted on billboard ads in the following photographs #: 1, 4, 11, 12, 13, 14 (top), 17, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27 (top), 29, 32, 34, and 35.

4

This includes images of women depicted on billboard ads in the following photographs #: 14 (bottom) Dalāl ‘Abd-al-‘Azīz, 27 Laila ‘Alwī, and 34 Fīfī ‘Abdū.

5

See billboard ads depicted in photographs #: 30, 31, and 33.

6

See billboards depicted in photographs #: 15-16, 26, and 28.

7

Life expectancy for Egyptians in 1973 was 53 years, rising to 62 in 1987 and 63.9 years in 1993 (UNDP, 1996; World Bank, 1991:155). The ARE Central Agency for Population and Mobilization Statistics reported life expectancy for Egyptian women as 66.4 years in their 1996 Annual Report, though this data was collected two years after my field work.

8

Respondents explained that Egyptians in general are very nationalistic and ethnocentric. They do not see themselves as Arabs or as Africans. Their identity is as Egyptians. Most Egyptians not only feel separate from and different from Arabs and Africans, they feel superior to them. These global sentiments do not vary with education or region; however, in the *Sa‘īd* (Upper Egypt), there is a similar distinction and disdain felt by both Nubians and *Sa‘īdīs* towards each other. Nubians originated in Sudan, the ancient land of *Nūba* (literally "land of gold" in the ancient Egyptian language). Nubians speak their own language, Nubian, and are physically quite distinct from other Egyptians, being very tall, thin, very black, with long slender noses and faces, very thin legs, and very short kinky hair. *Sa‘īdī*s are short, stocky, with very thick legs and short round or oval faces, brown but significantly lighter than Nubians. They speak Arabic. Besides the obvious differences in race, language, and culture, their economic base is very different. *Sa‘īdī*s are sedentary cultivators who prefer to live in rural villages and Nubians are traders, businessmen, and entrepreneurs who travel frequently and often migrate to Cairo to work. Some Nubians work as fishermen. Both Nubians and *Sa‘īdī*s believe that they are the direct descendants of the ancient Egyptians. *Sa‘īdī*s mock Nubians for believing they are "noble princes" and Nubians mock *Sa‘īdī*s for being "peasants". One respondent who was an anthropologist from the *Sa‘īd* explained these distinctions amongst Egyptians to me at great length.

9

I would like to note that Warren Farrell uses this term, "genetic beauty" in Why Men Are The Way They Are to describe how women are objectified in patriarchal societies, likewise for the term, "success object", referring to men's patriarchal role as breadwinner. But since I have been using the terms independently for many years, I will not refer to Farrell every time I use them.

10

Before the Egyptian Revolution of 1952, the vast majority of Egyptians -- probably 90% -- were poor, illiterate peasants who were malnourished and overworked; hence, they were thin. Judging from photographs, drawings, and paintings of rich Egyptian women during the past hundred years, they appear normal in weight by modern Western medical standards (though some of the men appear obese).

Today, however, the situation is much more complex and obesity is seen in all classes. This is due to a variety of reasons. Egyptian diet is very unhealthy, despite the abundance of fresh fruit, salad, and vegetables, because of their extremely high intake of salt, sugar, oil, and fat. Unlike pre-1952 Egypt, most food staples are highly subsidized by the state, making bread so cheap, for instance, that peasants use it to feed their chickens. Because subsidized American white flour has displaced local grains, most Egyptians eat too much white flour. Meat, though state-subsidized, remains beyond the reach of most Egyptians, and even middle class Egyptians can not afford to eat much meat, and certainly not every day. Most Egyptians subsist on bread, oil, hot pickles, vegetables, *ta'amayyah* (*filāfil*), *fatta* cheese, and *fūl* (horse or fava beans), black coffee and tea which is thick like syrup due to the high sugar content and length of time boiled. The middle class will add to this diet: eggs; milk; cream; rice, pasta and/or lentils (such as *khushirī*) and/or vegetables cooked in tomato paste, oil and/or *samn* (*ghee* or clarified butter); and various extremely sweet desserts such as *bakhlāwah*, *halāwah*, and *kunāfah*, *basbūsah*, etc.

Secondly, there is a wide array of relatively cheap high-calorie "junk food" with little, if any, nutritional value which people have become accustomed to eating and drinking in large quantities which was not available before the 1970's Open Door economic policy. Local companies, for instance, have been producing cheap soda pop which even the uneducated consumed in large quantities for decades prior to Coca Cola being allowed into the country, resulting in the marginalization of these local companies. Coke has become the drink of choice of all classes now. Egyptians do not drink water, resulting in a high incidence of kidney disease. There is also a growing availability of processed foods which have high sugar and fat content but less nutritional value than fresh food, resulting in a high incidence of diabetes (Agence France-Presse, Nov. 4, 1997). Frozen food is also becoming common as a convenience for the middle class. (In my final round of revisions of this dissertation, Mansour (1998) published an article about the poor diet and lack of information and/or concern about nutrition.

11

See al-Shaykh (1994) for a personal story about the importance of large breasts in "Arab" cultures.

12

Arabs have long believed that the size of the woman's mouth is indicative of the size of her vagina; hence, a woman with a large mouth would have a large vagina, which would imply that it would not give pleasure to the man and that the woman's sexual desire would be insatiable. This is part of a long-held patriarchal belief system in the Middle East that there is a correlation between the size, shape, and color of a woman's face, facial features, and neck with the size, shape, and color of the woman's external and internal genitalia as well as indicating if the vagina is "hot" or "cold", "damp" or "dry". Using examples from old Arabic erotic poetry and prose, Sabbah (1984:25-26) points out that a small, round, red mouth, a thin, short neck, and a small chin are preferred because they indicate that the woman's vagina is narrow, "tight", not too long, "hot", and "dry" -- seemingly ideal for maximizing the man's pleasure and his ability to satisfy the woman sexually. Furthermore, a red or short tongue indicates a "cold, damp" vagina and large nostrils indicate an "insatiable" vagina; needless to say, such characteristics are not prized in Arab societies, including Egypt!

13

Imitation of Westerners by Egyptians is referred to by Egyptians as the "*khawāgah* complex". "*Khawāgah*" is a colloquial Egyptian Arabic slang term originally meaning "outsider" or "stranger", but it has also become common to mean "Christian" or "European". In current practice, it would be applied to any Westerner. See also Lindisfarne (1997) and El-Messīrī (1978).

[14] See billboard ads in photos #25 and #29 respectively.

[15] See billboard ads in photos #: 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, and 35.

Chapter Five
The Adorned Woman: Covering the Body

"Eat what you like; dress to please others." Arab proverb
"God gives earrings to those without ears." Egyptian proverb
"S/he who is cloaked in the dress of another is naked." Arab proverb
"Walk hungry before your enemy, but not naked." Arab proverb

I. Traditional *Baladī*, *Muḥaggabah*, *S̲h̲armūṭah*, or Western Attire

Attire, or dress, was the next aspect of gender focussed upon by most of the respondents. Just as it became clear that the respondents distinguished between Egyptian identity and foreign identity in their identification of the physical aspects of the ideal beauty, so did they make similar distinctions in their discussion about attire. Type of clothing worn is not simply a matter of personal choice or fashion. The four general categories of Egyptian women's clothing reflect important social identities such as social class, social status, education, region, age, marital status, and interpretation of religion.

Despite the enormous differences in social identities amongst the women who wear different categories of attire, there are some norms which are almost universal. For instance, the respondents all believed that it is unacceptable and unfeminine for women to expose their shoulders, upper arms, chest, midriff, and legs above the knee. There was, however, disagreement as to whether the hair, face, neck, lower arms, hands, legs below the knee, and feet should be covered. Likewise, there was also disagreement as to whether the general shape of the body should be visible and whether belts should be worn. These disagreements reflected debate accruing far beyond Egypt's borders, with increasing acrimony amongst various Muslims groups regarding proper Muslim dress for women. Because traditional Coptic Christians also believe that women's bodies should be completely covered, there is a similar division between traditionalists and modernists within this Christian community in Egypt. Nevertheless, the majority of Egyptian women are peasants (*fallahāt* and *Sa'īdī*) who continue to wear the traditional long dresses (*gallābīyah/gallabīyāt*) which vary regionally. In Cairo, this dress style is generally referred to as *baladī* ("from the countryside").

Part of the debate about appropriate attire for Egyptian women also encompassed disagreement about whether the *higāb* (large, loose scarf completely covering the hair) should be worn by all Muslim women. The respondents did not agree whether the *higāb* and loose tent-like dress, which have become the uniform of the Islamic fundamentalists, are required by Islam for women as proper Muslim dress. In other words, not all the respondents agreed that Muslim women must be *muḥaggabah/muḥāggabāt* ([woman/women] completely covered with loose clothing); however, all respondents agreed that being *muḥaggabah* included wearing the *ḥigāb*. Similarly, but to a far less degree, there is division amongst Coptic Christians as to the necessity of maintaining the tradition of covering the hair.

Interestingly, some of the respondents who believed that Islam requires all women to be *muḥaggabāt* and that they have a duty to wear this type of clothing reported that they were not yet willing to do so. They said that they hoped to become *muḥaggabāt* in the future, but not now. Most of these women wore Western clothing. Other respondents who had worn Western clothing all their lives had, in fact, adopted *muḥaggabāt* attire relatively recently because they had changed their views about what was correct attire for Muslim women. In fact, there has been a significant change in public opinion about what constitutes acceptable attire for Muslim women in Egypt, brought about primarily by the ideological battle being waged amongst pro-Western secularists, liberal reform-minded Muslims, and Islamic fundamentalists promoting political Islam (Dwyer, 1991; Geadah, 1996). The October 1992 earthquake which caused widespread destruction and hundreds of deaths was interpreted by many Egyptians as punishment by God for not following Islam. This is a particularly good example of the dynamic nature of gender identity, since some respondents made drastic changes in their attire almost overnight. It is also a very good example of the ambivalence women feel about attire and gender identity. Many respondents felt torn between the attire they have worn all their lives and its association with a more Western feminine gender identity and the *muḥaggabāt* attire which has become a symbol of Islamic identity.

The following comments were triggered by a billboard ad for *muḥaggabāt* clothing (photo #3), reflecting respondents' beliefs, behavior, and feelings about the very controversial subject of appropriate attire for Muslim women. The first set of comments are by respondents who have recently adopted some, if not all, aspects of "Islamic dress":

> I started wearing *ḥigāb* two years ago because I was convinced to wear it by people in the religion classes at the mosque which I used to attend. I paid 27 pounds for this *ḥigāb* from the mosque. It is made of silk [polyester] (Respondent #29)
>
> After the death of my husband and brother, I got rid of all the dresses I had which were not all the way down to my feet. I used to wear dresses that were mid-calf length...I have seen women in dresses like this. (Respondent #41) When I was young, I used to wear dresses with shorter sleeves and wider necklines and mid-calf length. Now, I don't wear them outside, but I wear them in the house if they are full length. I gave away all my dresses which were shorter. (Respondent #41 for photo #2)
>
> This style is becoming very popular here in Egypt. You know, Susan, since the earthquake, we are becoming more religious. Many people are now taking care to be more religious. We are attending mosque more regularly. The mosques are full of women and men now. We are covering our hair. You remember, the last time you were here five years ago, I did not cover my hair. Now, I must...Even [though] I cover all my hair, I do not wear *muḥaggabāt* dresses. (Respondent #5)
>
> I started wearing the *ḥigāb* four years ago because I was convinced that it was the right thing to do. I never wore it all my life but I was looking. I wanted so much to wear it, but I didn't wear it before four years ago. It wasn't...[my husband's] idea, but he agreed with me. My mother started to wear the *ḥigāb* from ten years ago. (Respondent #12)
>
> At home, I wear whatever I want, but in the street, I must be completely covered, even if I have a very nice dress on. Couples get divorced because some women wear these clothes and

> their husbands want them to wear Western clothes and also some get divorced because the woman wears Western clothes and her husband wants her to wear Islamic dress. This is a common problem with couples. I wear these clothes because I want to and my husband doesn't mind. If my husband tries to force me to wear Western clothes, I would refuse because I do not want to go to Hell. Even if this results in divorce, I would not wear Western clothes. [She adopted *muḥaggabāt* clothing rather than traditional *baladī gallābīyah* after the 1992 earthquake] (Respondent #29)

Some respondents who did not wear "Islamic dress" but believed that it was necessary for them to adopt it also felt conflicted, as evidenced in the following comments:

> Most women, especially older women are wearing these kinds of clothes. Most schools now have dark colored uniforms for girls and usually a scarf is part of the uniform. This is the trend these days. Even on t.v., we see *muḥaggabāt* frequently. Now, when I go outside the house, I wear sleeves half way down the forearm or even long sleeves. I don't wear long dresses yet. This has been a trend for the past two years to make women feel they must dress this way. It became more pressure after the earthquake. Women are going to the mosques now since the earthquake. They not only go for prayers, but for lessons in religion, usually at 7 and 9:30 pm. On Fridays, the mosques are all overflowing with people and half of them are women. Even my daughter...wears long dresses when she goes out on the streets now. (Respondent #32)

> Before we don't have clothes like this to make shopping for Muslim clothes. I feel happy when I see a lot of shops like this. Most of the women now used to wear this and it was hard before to find these kinds of clothes. Now it is too easy to get it and good that it can be easily found. [Do you ever dress as *muḥaggabah*?] No, I don't. It's not good. I have to wear it, but not now. Maybe when I get older, I will wear it. It's Muslim clothes. I have to put it on. It's not good to wear clothes like I wear now; it's not Muslim. In my religion, I have to wear it. My religion told me I have to wear it. It's better for us...but we like life too much....We think that if we wear this, we will not be beautiful, to hide your hair, but it's not a good idea. In the religion, a woman must hide everything except her hands and her face. Women must not walk in the streets like this. She must hide her hair and her body. God will punish us for this [dressing as she does, in Western clothes]. I dress like this because I don't like to hide my hair. I know that I am wrong. I am not right, but maybe one day I will wear it. My husband cares, but I don't listen to him -- that's not good, too. He prefers me to wear the *ḥigāb*. He took me to Mecca twice. I tell you what, if I wear the *ḥigāb*, I feel that I am older than my age, you know? So maybe I will wear it after three or four years, but it's not right [to not wear it now]; it's wrong. The *Qur'ān* says this and I believe in this, but I like the modern clothes and the modern way of life...For me, it's my style. You see, I wear short, tight skirts. I do not cover my hair. I am bad for this, but I can't help it. I am used to this modern way, but it is not my religion. I must change. When I am older, it will not be so hard. (Respondent #6)

> I think that one day, I will wear Islamic dresses, but I think I will wear better models than this. I don't like classic ones that everyone wears. I get sad when I go to the streets and see another woman wearing a blouse or skirt like mine. I feel repeated. I like to have my own style, you know. (Respondent #11)

Some respondents expressed a great deal of confusion and anxiety about whether being *muḥaggabāt* was required "Islamic dress" as well as whether they would ever adopt it, as reflected in the following comments:

> I must do this, but I don't know, my God! I must wear it, but I don't know when I will. I can't wear it at work because my position won't allow it. I speak with everybody. Like actress, can't do it. Not for people, but for myself. I would not feel comfortable. I don't like it, but I must wear it. The belt is not good for *muḥaggabāt*. They would not wear a belt. Maybe they put it here to encourage people like me to become *muḥaggabāt*. (Respondent #20)

> I don't use these clothes at all. I don't like this style...I don't really know. Many girls, too, are doing this. I think it became part of school uniforms now, but I don't know why. Many girls did this before the earthquake. It's Islamic dress. This dress is not Islamic really, anyway. It shouldn't have a belt. I think they are doing the right thing. My clothes are not Islamic, but I can't wear these Islamic dresses. Ten years ago, there were no girls wearing Islamic dresses, only old women. But now, there are many girls wearing Islamic dress. This is a good trend. [Will you adopt Islamic clothing?] I don't know. Maybe when I get old, but not now. I don't like Islamic clothes at all, but I know it is right to wear them, but I can't now. I just don't like them. [If your husband told you to wear Islamic clothing, would you?] I wouldn't choose a man who thinks like this. Maybe I will change my mind after a few years. I don't know. (Respondent #34)

Respondents who did not wear "Islamic dress" and refused to do so even in the future made the following comments:

> If this is how they like it, then it's ok, but not for me! Even I spent so many years in Kuwait, but never I be *muḥaggabāt*! (Respondent #37)

> I wouldn't wear one...I buy [*muḥaggabāt* clothes] for my mother and some of my sisters who wear this kind of stuff. I would never wear it! All three of my sisters wear it. I never wore this kind of stuff except when I had to in Sa'udi Arabia. (Respondent #28)

> You know this habit, this *muḥaggabāt* thing, it started in earnest after the earthquake. Many people felt they were being punished by God for not being faithful Muslims. They got this idea that if they become more faithful, dress more conservatively, reject the West, they will prosper and be rewarded. Now you see many women dress in this way. It is even common at the university, among the professors and the students. It is a requirement of Islam, and it will not solve problems of individuals or of society. (Respondent #3)

> ...[T]hat is for Muslim woman...I would not wear a dress like that. It's good for [those] who wear this. It's suitable, but I [will] not wear this veil. It is not suitable for me. (Respondent #15)

In addition, there was disagreement amongst the respondents as to what constituted legitimate, authentic *muḥaggabāt* attire. Some of the particulars of this debate include whether *muḥaggabāt* could wear dresses with patterns and/or decoration and/or bright colors and/or expensive material and/or belts. Some believed that these aspects of female attire violate the principle of Muslim dress: not to draw attention to the body, to hide all evidence of a female body, and to appear asexual. Therefore, these respondents believed that such attire negated the purpose of being *muḥaggabāt*. Other respondents, however, did not agree.

Some felt that a woman did not have to give up being fashionable in order to be *muḥaggabāt*, but they fell along a continuum as to what they would accept as compatible with being *muḥaggabāt*. The same disagreements and arguments were used regarding whether or not the *ḥigāb* should be patterned and/or decorated and/or arranged in fashionable ways and/or made of expensive material. The following sets of comments refer to photo #3 which depicts a woman dressed as a *muḥaggabah* in a billboard ad for a dress shop which caters to *muḥaggabāt* clothing, and they reflect this diversity of views about what constitutes authentic clothing for *muḥaggabāt*. The first set of comments characterize the most liberal interpretation of what it means to be *muḥaggabah*:

> There are some *muḥaggabāt* outfits which are very nice. They have belts. They are very fashionable, dignified, and beautiful. Many of the nice ones come from Turkey. (Respondent #1)
>
> I think *muḥaggabāt* women would like this dress. I see many of them wearing things like this. Even though they are not supposed to wear decorated dresses or belts, many do. I think this dress would be popular with many of those women. (Respondent #52)
>
> This dress is *'asil* (honey), *mīyah, mīyah* (100%). I like it very much. This dress is long and has long sleeves. I like the scarf and the belt is very nice. They match the dress well [but] I never saw *muḥaggabāt* with a belt like this. It is more stylish and maybe they are trying to convince the *muḥaggabāt* to wear these kinds of dresses and also maybe trying to get other women to wear these clothes. (Respondent #31)
>
> Some *muḥaggabāt* allow some hair to show and even may wear somewhat shorter skirts and also wear the belt, but others would not. Myself, I think this dress is nice...I might buy it... (Respondent #24)

The next set of comments also reflect a liberal interpretation of being fashionable as *muḥaggabāt*, and views the dress depicted in photo #3 as fashionable, but sets some limits, particularly opposing the use of belts:

> The dress is beautiful, *gamīlah*...The belt is not good for *muḥaggabāt*. They would not wear a belt. Maybe they put it here to encourage people like me to become *muhaggabāt* (Respondent #20)
>
> I like this dress, but there should not be a belt. *Muḥaggabāt* do not wear belts. Their figures should not be apparent. The dress itself looks more like a nightdress than a dress for the streets. It would be better if she wears the *humār*. It should be the proper way or not at all. I don't like women wearing half and half, *muḥaggabāt* and Western at the same time. So...they should change it. (Respondent #38)
>
> This dress is very nice. It's long with long sleeves. The belt is extra. If you like to wear it, you can. I would not. At home, I wear whatever I want, but in the street, I must be completely covered, even if I have a very nice dress on. (Respondent #29)

The following comments reflect the belief that while *muḥaggabāt* attire can be fashionable, the dress depicted in photo #3 is not fashionable. They also believed that belts, decoration, bright colors, and flashy material are not acceptable *muḥaggabāt* attire. Furthermore, some pointed out that some of the woman's hair and feet are visible, which is also not acceptable.

> I don't like this dress at all...The young *muḥaggabāt* like more modern clothes. This dress is not really modern and I don't think young women would wear it. It would be better like a *gallābīyah* without any belt. *Muḥaggabāt* would not wear dresses with designs like this because they attract too much attention. (Respondent #40)
>
> This is very strange. *Muḥaggabāt* do not wear such designs. This is not acceptable to have a belt like this. It must be a much looser dress, not so much design like this. Also, her hair is not covered. This is not acceptable for *muhaggabāt*. See also her feet. They must not be seen. I think this ad is not made by someone who understands *muḥaggabāt*. (Respondent #44)
>
> The dress is not Islamic dress. It must be white and no belt and no design or decoration at all. This dress is also not long enough. It must cover all the flesh. Her hair is showing, which is not acceptable in Islam. This is not a good ad for *muḥaggabāt*. See the curve in her body here? This must not be. Any woman is *muḥaggabah*, she will not like this dress. (Respondent #50)
>
> I hate this commercial. I saw it in the street and I didn't think for once time to go to this shop because when you are going to dress *ḥigāb*, you don't have to wear an ugly dress like this. You should choose a good material with small flowers, any material, cotton or whatever, but I hate this design. I hate the designs they put for Muslim women here. In Egypt, there are no decent clothes for *ḥigāb* women. When I choose my clothes, I go to material shops and then I get a tailor to make my clothes. *Muḥaggabāt* would not wear belts, either. The *ḥigāb* must not show the body. This is the real idea about *higāb* so that no one knows what your body is like. I never go to such *muḥaggabāt* shops because their clothes are terrible. This dress is *baladī*. Only *baladī* women would wear it...The colors are good overall, though. (Respondent #47)
>
> Of course, this is not the kind of dress a woman wearing the veil would wear, especially the belt; it's too large. You find that most of the women wearing veil do not use belts because it is preferable to wear large white clothes, dresses that do not show your figure, especially if she is a little bit fat. First of all, it's not an ordinary dress. It's not a dress one wears in the morning. It's like a nightgown, a dress to wear in a party, a wedding. It has this shining stuff, decoration on the front. This stuff in silver and the belt in the color of silver, silver color, it's like a fancy dress. Maybe they want to say that they have *chic* clothes...The most important thing is that the dress should be wide. Those who are fanatic also wear plain colors like white, black, grey, blue. They don't wear dresses with any design. It's more like a *gallābīyah*. (Respondent #25)
>
> This is too showy for a *muḥaggabah*. If you are talking about the real *muḥaggabah*, the conservative women who wish to be very religious and to wear traditional, conservative clothing, they would wear very loose clothes, almost like tents. The idea of *muḥaggabah* is that she would wear something very loose and not show the lines of her geography. But to wear something eye-catching defeats the purpose. They would not want to draw attention to their clothing or their bodies. They would wear dark clothes without patterns or decoration and without waistlines or contour...I don't think this serves the purpose.

(Respondent #19)

As indicated above, some respondents who said they believed that all Muslim women must be *muḥaggabāt* were not themselves *muḥaggabāt*, but said that they must become so in the future. They found it difficult to give up their dress habits now and criticized themselves for not practicing Islam more faithfully. These women, most of whom were middle class, believed that it was wrong and immoral for women not to be *muḥaggabāt* and that they would be condemned to Hell if they did not repent and voluntarily become *muḥaggabāt*, the sooner, the better. This was an area of significant contradiction between ideology and behavior for these particular respondents; yet it has also become the case for a significant proportion of middle class Egyptian women, most of whom have grown up wearing only Western clothing.

For lower-middle class women, adopting traditional dress provides immediate rewards, economic and social, so they have been much more willing to do so. Thus, it has become the norm now for lower-middle class women to wear the *ḥigāb* whether or not they wear Western clothing. For the *fallahāt* (peasant women) and *baladī* (poor urban) women, becoming *muḥaggabāt* is problematic because it involves purchasing new clothing, and the clothing itself encumbers their productive labor; thus, this vast majority of Egyptian women have not accepted it, though they almost universally cover their hair with the traditional *baladī* transparent scarf (*mandīl*). Those who do become *muḥaggabāt* are usually mocked by others in their class for trying to present themselves in a higher social class status.

Finally, a bizarre twist to this renewed social pressure for women to cover their bodies is that many young and middle-aged lower and lower-middle class women are wearing black tights and long blouses or T-shirts, without a skirt or dress. Furthermore, some young women are wearing black tights covered by a long, sheer, transparent, black skirt or dress. While technically covered, the intention behind being *muḥaggabāt* is, of course, undermined, since the contours of the body are plainly visible through the fabric. The Pharaonic link here is hard to dismiss: most clothing depicted in Pharaonic art is transparent, revealing rather than concealing the body. Whether or not the women who dressed in this fashion were aware of this Pharaonic link is another matter, of course. Most were probably unaware of this aspect of Pharaonic dress.

These developments in the changing patterns of women's dress reflect the changing conceptualizations of gender, Muslim identity, and Egyptian identity which are occurring in Egyptian society today, and, indeed, amongst Muslims in many societies. Although the veil, which was worn by ancient Assyrian and Persian women, was known in Pharaonic Egypt, it was never adopted by the ancient Egyptians, who preferred to reveal more of the body than they concealed. Rather, the adoption of the veil by wealthy Egyptian women was associated with Islam and took place long after the Arab conquest. Having been rejected by middle and upper class women less than fifty years ago through adoption of "modern" Western attire, it seems the veil is making a comeback in Egypt, again as much as an anti-Western, anti-imperialist reaction as an Islamic influence. Other aspects of *muḥaggabāt* attire, however, are much more recent, stemming from the development of political Islam in the modern era, particularly since the 1970's.

This leads to an interesting question: if Muslim women **must** be *muḥaggabāt*, then one can no longer speak about idealized **physical** beauty, at least not in terms of positive, moral aspects of femininity in the public sphere. The point of being *muhaggabāt* is to hide all physical attributes of being female and not draw attention to the female body. A pious woman is asexual, at least in the public sphere. A woman's beauty -- and sexuality -- can only be seen and appreciated by her husband in the private sphere of the household, even more specifically, the bedroom. Most *muḥaggabāt* do not remove their *gallabīyāt* (*gallābīyah*) and '*aḥgabbah* (*higāb*) in the presence of anyone other than their husbands, parents, and children, even within the household. Thus, the *muḥaggabah* would be the idealized moral, good Muslim woman, exhibiting the positive aspects of femininity in both the public and private spheres. It would be her lack of visible beauty and her seeming asexuality which would be valued, not her physical beauty. This is very similar to the Madonna complex, the "good" woman, in Western societies.

The alternative, a woman whose beauty is visible publicly, would be considered indecent and immoral. Such women are considered to be prostitutes, public property available to all men, not the private property of one man. They would no longer be the epitome of positive femininity, but would, in fact, typify negative and "evil" aspects of femininity -- the other side of the Madonna complex, the Whore (*s̲h̲armūṭah*). This is plainly evidenced daily as men openly sexually harass women passersby in the streets, on buses, and in trains, particularly if these women are not *muḥaggabāt* and if they have no male chaperon/guardian accompanying them. This public sexual harassment is tolerated because such women are "evil" and deserve to be punished. Attributes other than attire which distinguish "good" women from "evil" women are discussed in Chapter Six.

Despite the widespread support for being *muḥaggabah* as the ideal Muslim attire for women, there is great deviation in practice. Many Egyptian women combine elements of different categories of dress, such as Western clothing but with the hair covered. Amongst the respondents with higher education, twenty-one (60%) wore Western clothing with no head covering. Of the fourteen (40%) respondents who wore some sort of head covering, one wore Western clothing (legs and arms fully covered) with scarf or short *ḥigāb*, ten wore the traditional *gallābīyah* and scarf, and three wore the traditional *gallābīyah* and short *ḥigāb*. Of those with no higher education, eight (50%) wore Western clothing with no head covering, two (12.5%) wore Western clothing with a scarf, four (25%) wore traditional *gallābīyah* with a *baladī* (often transparent) scarf (*mandīl*), one wore the traditional *gallābīyah* with short *higāb*, and one wore the traditional *gallābīyah* with long *ḥigāb*. Nine of the ten women who wore Western clothing, with or without a scarf, had at least some high school education, and one had some preparatory education. This contrasts with the six women who wore the traditional *gallābīyah*, whether with a *baladī* scarf (*mandīl*) or a short or long *ḥigāb*; five of these six women were illiterate and the sixth had only primary education.

These distinctions in dress reflect those in Egyptian society. In general, attire is a marker of social class status, as was evidenced amongst the respondents. The vast majority of the Egyptian population are illiterate peasants (*fallaḥūn*), all of whom wear the baggy traditional cotton *gallābīyah* (slightly different styles for men and women but both full length with long sleeves). Peasant women (*fallaḥāt*) wear a thin, transparent polyester *baladī* scarf (*mandīl*) wrapped around their heads which generally does not cover their necks. In both rural and urban areas, most peasants do not wear shoes, though cheap, plastic thongs are often used by both men and women. Still, it is common for them to be bare-footed. Since anyone with at least some high school education would want to distinguish her/himself from those with less education, this traditional dress is shed once a person gets to high school.[1]

Those with at least some high school education generally avoid wearing cotton, since it is an indigenous material and used by only the poorest Egyptians. Those from the lower-middle and middle class wear Western-style clothing. For women, this would be skirt and blouse or dress perhaps with a jacket, or a suit. The material used is generally rayon or polyester, though nylon and banlon are also worn. Despite the prevalence of both Egyptian-made and cheap Asian imported Western-style clothing, it is still significantly more expensive than traditional clothing; and furthermore, it requires a great deal more upkeep. Besides the basic clothing, those who wear Western-style clothing also have to buy numerous accessories such as belts, bows, hair pieces, stockings, and shoes. In addition, zippers and buttons often need replacing.

The upper-middle and upper classes wear more expensive clothing made of rayon, polyester, wool, and even silk, usually imported from Europe. For formal occasions, they wear the same range of clothing and materials as found in the West. Their clothing and accessories would be significantly more expensive than those used by the less privileged.

Therefore, the style of attire as outlined above is a salient signifier for social class status in Egypt which has existed since the early years of this century. It reflects Western influence and is strongly associated with "modernization". Since the early 1980's, a counter-hegemonic conceptualization of proper attire for women, being *muḥaggabāt*, has gained significant following with the rising popularity of Islamic fundamentalism, or political Islam. This movement seeks to delegitimize Western influences in Egypt and replace them with "Islamic" ones. Thus, a growing minority of urban women, particularly from the lower-middle and middle classes, are abandoning Western clothing and becoming *muḥaggabāt*.

Despite agreement amongst respondents and Egyptians in general that it was unacceptable and unfeminine for women to expose their shoulders, upper arms, lower neck chest, midriff, and legs above the knee, twenty billboard ads depicted women dressed indecently by **any** Egyptian standard because these body parts were not covered. In two cases, the woman's midriff was not covered, making them the most obscene of all the images.[2] In twelve other photographs of billboards, the women depicted were dressed decently, with the exception of hair being exposed, which would be objectionable only for *muḥaggabāt*. Finally, one billboard ad (photo #7) depicted a bride dressed in a Western bridal dress and veil which exposed too much chest for most Egyptians. These women were described as "naked" (*'arīyānah*) by the respondents.

In terms of hair coverage, only five billboard images depicted women covering their hair wearing *baladī* scarves (*mandīl*) with some hair and the neck showing, one (photo #18) of which also depicted a woman wearing a *Sa'īdī shāl* with some hair but no neck showing.[3] One billboard ad (photo #4) portrayed a woman with a Western shower cap on and some hair protruding from the sides, and another billboard ad (photo #7) showed a bride wearing a Western bridal dress and veil with most of her hair visible.

Three billboards depicted both women with no hair covering and women wearing the *mandīl*. Three billboards depicted women wearing fashionable, *chic* Western hats with most of their hair showing. Only one billboard ad (photo #3) depicted a woman who is *muḥaggabah*; she was wearing a *shāl*-type *ḥigāb*, but some hair is visible. The dress shown is not one which would be acceptable to most *muḥaggabāt* because it had a belt, was not full or loose enough and had far too much decoration, pattern, and attention drawn to the breasts. Ironically, not only was this the sole ad depicting a *muḥaggabah*, it was an ad for *muḥaggabāt* dress shops. As indicated above, this precipitated a number of critical comments by the respondents, many of whom believed that the artist was probably a man who had no idea what is appropriate attire for *muḥaggabāt*. Thirty-six billboards depicted women with nothing covering their hair.

Overall, the images of women in billboard ads were not representative of Egyptian women in terms of attire. Most of them would be considered indecent by Egyptians in general as well as by the respondents in particular. Because dress is a major marker of a woman's status as "good" versus "evil", this has far-reaching implications, as discussed in Chapter Six. The following comments are indicative of respondents' views about such revealing attire:

> As you see, she is not decent. She is not covered. Can you see any woman dress[ed] like this in Egypt? It's not something we do. Even the foreigners, they don't look like this. (Respondent #23 for photo #34)
>
> I don't like this because the woman in this picture don't wear all her clothes. In our society, it is important to wear all our clothes, not make this part of the body without wearing anything. Her shoulders and chest must be covered. I don't want to face [see] this area from [of] women. It is not respected as I think because our religion and our tradition; all of us prefer to see woman all covered up like this, like I wear everyday. (Respondent #14 for photo #12)
>
> She's supposed to be Egyptian, but she is wearing stuff no Egyptian female would wear...She doesn't look nice at all...It doesn't fit with the culture. No Egyptian would wear this dress even to a nightclub or a dance. They might wear something similar, but it would

> always be covered with a long jacket and so you would never see the top part, especially the shoulders and arms. (Respondent #17 for photo #34)

> It's not appropriate to have naked women. Maybe if women are considered to be objects and bodies, this is ok for men. But for me as a woman, I do not accept this. (Respondent #22 for photo #12)

> They are exploiting...Yusrā...Yusrā is revealing much more of her body, to her legs, and the tight dress...to attract young men. I object to this kind of exploitation in general of women. (Respondent #25 for photo #12)

> No one goes in the street like this. It has never happened. It is *aib* or naughty. Even the real *mu'allimmah* would not wear such a thing...[They] usually wear long-sleeved dresses...but never a dress like this...It's not acceptable in the streets. If I wore dresses like this, people would start talking about me all the time. I have to live with them, so I wouldn't wear such a dress. Some women would wear it to a nightclub or a movie, but not walk in it in the streets. (Respondent #27 for photo #34)

> Egyptian women do not dress like this. I don't think Fīfī 'Abdū wears such things in real life. Maybe they want her to look more modern, more Western, but still she looks like a *baladī* woman. An educated woman would not be so vulgar. We must cover ourselves and be more dignified and soft. (Respondent #12 for photo #34)

> We do not wear clothes like this in Egypt, but they do very funny things in the movies...I think the dress she is wearing is one which women all over the world would wear if they were actresses or dancers or prostitutes. It's not a dress a decent woman would wear anywhere. (Respondent #52 for photo #34)

Another item of attire which presented some controversy amongst the respondents was the use of stockings. This came up in response to one particular billboard ad (photo #2) for stockings and underwear which depicted legs arranged upside down in a fan-like pattern, each one modeling a different colored opaque stocking. This was, in fact, the only billboard ad which depicted women's stockings.

The respondents also said that it was too hot to wear stockings, whether orlon or sheer nylon, most of the time in Egypt. Middle and upper-middle class respondents said they would wear dark colored orlon stockings during the winter, particularly inside the house, to keep their legs warm. They would wear beige, brown, or perhaps black sheer nylon stockings mainly for attending a formal event, particularly a wedding.

> In winter only, *baladī* women wear beige or black, but the *muḥaggabāt* wear black ones year around. (Respondent #32)

Lower-middle class and *fallaḥāt* respondents said that they would like to wear orlon stockings, especially during the winter, but cannot afford them. These stockings cost £E 8, much more than most Egyptians pay for one month's rent, so even for the middle class, they are not cheap. These lower-middle class and *fallaḥāt* respondents also would never wear nylon stockings because they are not appropriate for their social class and because they could not afford them, anyway.

> I don't wear them because they destroy your money. They tear right away and I don't have money for them. I never buy such stockings because I can't afford them. (Respondent #29)
>
> The colors are bad, too. Nobody wears such colors. This is for children! These stockings are very expensive. The stockings are about eight pounds and the pantyhose are twelve pounds. This is too much! (Respondent #37)
>
> I hope that one day we can walk without wearing these stockings, you know, because I think they are very expensive. More than being expensive, what matters is that they don't live very long. They get cut from the first or second wear. If it stays more than that, it would be good luck, you know? So it needs a big amount of money in winter to buy these filet stockings. It would be very bad appearance of wearing a cut one, you know? I can't walk wearing a cut filet stockings. It would be very apparent and very bad looking, so that I think that the Islamic wear is practical, you know, because the long clothes would allow you not to wear stockings, you know, or wearing another type of stockings that doesn't get cut from the first or second wear, you understand? So that I am lucky that summer is coming, to stop wearing these stockings. I don't wear stockings...You can't tolerate stockings in summer. It's very hot. No one wears stockings in summer...I don't like the colors...Not all the colors are practical. The most common color girls wear in winter is the black...Next comes the light beige color...Next comes the grey color, but it's not very common....I didn't see a woman wearing the yellow or blue, or red or turqoise stockings. It would be very awful, I think. I don't know any woman who would wear these colors. It's not very *chic*...I don't like these many colored ones...I use plain colors only. (Respondent #11)

Pharaonic art does not depict women of any social class wearing stockings, so it is difficult to know if they were worn; however, as mentioned previously, Pharaonic women often wore transparent clothing, revealing more of their bodies than they concealed, so exposing stockings would not have presented a problem for them. In the Arab traditions influencing Islam, however, "decent" women would not expose their legs, so whatever stockings they wore were not visible. In keeping with the Islamic principle of decent women not drawing attention to their bodies, bright colored stockings would probably be unacceptable, as indeed, was the opinion of the *muḥaggabāt* respondents as well as those who aspired to be *muḥaggabāt*. Likewise, traditional Coptic Christians must cover their legs with long dresses and wear only dark brown, grey, or black stockings. Thus, most Egyptian women today are far more influenced by Arab norms than Pharaonic ones regarding the covering of legs.

A. Color

Comments about stockings also revealed that color is another important factor in attire. It not only determines gender-appropriateness but also the class and regional origins of the woman. It also distinguishes between those who hold literal versus figurative interpretations of religion, whether Islam, Christianity, or Judaism.

For instance, most of the respondents believed that bright colored stockings were acceptable for children but not for women, particularly married women. This seemed to be the middle class norm in Cairo. The *Sa'īdī* women disagreed, as they liked to wear bright colored, patterned, and decorated stockings -- *albeit* unseen underneath their *gallabīyāt*. Some respondents believed that upper class women might wear green, blue, or red stockings, but not yellow, to match their outfit, though this was perceived as imitating Westerners. Indeed, one upper class woman interviewed said that she did wear dark blue or green stockings, though not bright red or yellow ones.

> It is out of fashion to wear such colors. It used to be fashionable, but I don't see anyone wearing these bright colors anymore. Women wear beige, black, brown, but not these other colors. Maybe these bright colors are for young girls, maybe. It would not be appropriate for a woman to wear red stockings... (Respondent #26)
>
> Students and young women wear these bright colors, of course. I think the fad for such bright stockings is over, but you may still find students wearing such things. (Respondent #52)
>
> I would not wear these colors, except for beige and black in winter, but there are many women who wear green, yellow, and red stockings, especially in winter. I have even seen women wearing these in summer. *Baladī* women in particular would wear these colors. They may wear green dresses and red stockings, but you can see a lower-middle class woman wearing a red dress and red stockings or a green dress and green stockings, but this is not something a classy woman would wear. It is not *chic*. Girls wear them, also. (Respondent #28)
>
> Before my husband and brother died, yes, I used to wear them [bright colored stockings]. I don't since they died. I think many women like to wear these bright colored stockings. (Respondent #41)
>
> [Do women wear bright colored stockings?] Not women in my class. You could find some very rich women with clothes and shoes and purse all the same color and even the same colored stockings. (Respondent #32)
>
> Many *muḥaggabāt* wear such colored stockings. I wear red stockings when I wear long dresses, but I would never wear them with shorter dresses. (Respondent #20)

All the respondents agreed that beige or brown stockings were the most commonly worn by Egyptian women. Most of the respondents believed that brown and grey are appropriate colors for women to wear, including stockings, but that they are rather unattractive colors. Brown tones were common for *muḥaggabāt* to wear. Most women said that beige stockings are fine, especially if they are sheer. Opaque brown stockings, on the other hand, were considered unattractive and suitable only for old women. Most respondents said that they would not wear grey stockings, whether sheer or opaque, as they are also more appropriate for old women.

Interestingly, some women believed that sheer black stockings were sexy, while others believed the opposite -- that black stockings, even sheer, were only for old women and/or for the *muḥaggabāt*. Most women said that they would not wear grey stockings, and some said that grey was also more appropriate for old women.

> I wear beige or black only. I don't even like grey, but some women wear grey. I think grey is for old women. I think grey is a depressing and boring color. I don't like it. Beige makes me feel soft and delicate, and black makes me feel that I am a woman. The black shows the legs nicely. I think only children and poor women wear red stockings, but poor people cannot wear Charmaine because it is too expensive for the poor. (Respondent #48)

> Only *baladī* women [wear bright colored stockings]. Most women wear only black or beige. Sometimes, I see wealthy women wearing different colors like this, but I would never do so. (Respondent #33)

There are some very similar parallels with Western societies. Red, for instance, is symbolic of sex and would indicate sexual provocativeness, seduction, and immorality. Women wearing red would be considered dancers, singers, actors, and/or prostitutes. Red is the symbol of the "evil woman".

> It would not be appropriate for a woman to wear red stockings, especially for a married woman. Red color is associated with attraction, seduction, even bad things. Night gowns and underwear in shops are red. Lipstick is red. It is associated with seduction. Women should only put it on for the sake of their husbands. This is not my real view, but what most women think. (Respondent #26 for photo #2)

> Here, she [Fīfī ʻAbdū] looks like a courtesan, a loose woman. I think the dress is similar in most countries, daring. Usually they are red or black. This is international. (Respondent #51 for photo #34)

Red, however, is a color worn by brides from many minority groups, but particularly by bedouin groups in Egypt. A red bridal dress is indicative of the blood which would flow from the virgin on her wedding night. Often, the bridal dress also has black portions. Egypt does not have a national dress; rather, there are regional and tribal costumes. They are worn today primarily by the uneducated, since Western dress is a symbol of education in Egypt.

Ironically, black has two very different connotations: the pious, pure woman and the seductive, "evil" woman. Black is the color of mourning and is worn at funerals and by widows. It is also the most commonly worn color by *baladī* women for *gallābīyāt* (traditional dresses) and their transparent scarves (*mandīlāt*), as well as for opaque, orlon stockings. Black is also the preferred color for *muḥaggabāt* clothing. Veils, but not *ḥigāb*, are almost always black. Older women prefer to wear black; thus, most menopausal women in Egypt wear black. It indicates that the woman is off-limits as a sex object.

> Many or some of them [*muḥaggabāt*] wouldn't like to wear bright colors, but I don't think that all women who wear these types of clothes wear [only] dark colors...These kind of women I told you about who are very restricted [*muḥaggabāt*], they wear the dark

> colors...[only] black and brown. (Respondent #11 for photo #3)

On the other hand, black can be a symbol of sexuality, sexual provocativeness, and seduction, usually associated with the "evil" woman. Black is worn by prostitutes from all classes. As with red, black is the color of evening dresses, loungerie, Western-style fashionable underwear, sheer nylon stockings, etc. This attire, however, is worn only by urban, educated, middle and upper class women. It is not found amongst lower-middle class and *baladī* women or *fallaḥtāt*. One middle class respondent made the following comment:

> Beige makes me feel soft and delicate, and black makes me feel that I am a woman. (Respondent #48 for photo #2)

Bright colors such as yellow, orange, pink, purple, and fluorescent colors are avoided by most women in Egypt, as discussed above, because they are considered low class, "gaudy", and somewhat sexually provocative since they draw attention to the body. Wearing bright colored clothing, however, is typical of *Sa'īdī* women, primarily uneducated ones. Furthermore, *Sa'īdī* women do not usually wear solid-colored bright clothing. Rather, they wear brightly patterned clothing, usually floral designs.

> In their thinking, red or orange or fluorescent colors are not suitable, these traditional people, even bright purple and yellow. They think these colors are not nice and not Islamic. (Respondent #11 for photo #3)

> The colors are bad, too. Nobody wears such [bright] colors. This is for children! (Respondent #37 for photo #2)

Muted tones of blue, green, purple, pink, yellow, and orange are considered appropriate and are worn by middle and upper class women, usually Western-style clothing. Some upper class women wear sheer stockings which match the color of their outfit, which is perceived as imitating Westerners. Pastel clothing is not usually worn by lower-middle class women nor by *baladī* and *fallaḥāt* women.

> I like her suit...I like this color. We call it fuchsia, or pink. (Respondent #11 for photo #8)

Children from all classes, however, wear bright colors, though it is more likely that educated people would choose bright-colored Western-style clothing for their children while *baladī* parents would choose traditional clothing or cheap Asian imports which imitate Western styles. Thus, through the comments respondents made about the images of women depicted in the billboard ads, it is obvious that the color of clothing is an important marker of class, region, ethnicity, and interpretation of religion in Egypt, as well as a means of distinguishing between the "good" and the "evil" woman.

B. Plain Versus Patterned, Imported Versus Indigenous Attire

Just as the color of attire is important in identifying a woman's class, ethnic and regional status, and interpretation of religion, so, too, do other attributes of the cloth used. Most Egyptians prefer clothing which is not patterned; plain colors are preferred.[4] Black, dark blue, and white are the preferred colors for the *gallābīyāt* (traditional dresses) worn by the *fallaḥāt*; and their (usually) transparent head scarves (*mandīlāt*), which are usually black and decorated with tassles. Many *fallaḥāt* also wear a long scarf (*ṭarḥah/ṭawarḥāh*) over the head scarf, crossed over at the neck and thrown over the shoulders, concealing the neck and shoulders. This *ṭarḥah* could be made of an opaque, heavy material or of a light, transparent material, but usually it is black. In general, the *gallābīyāt* are made of cotton, though cotton-polyester blends are becoming more common, particularly for men. The *muḥaggabāt* also prefer plain black, dark blue, or white, but also commonly wear brown or beige *gallābīyāt* and *ḥigāb*. In general, their clothing is made of polyester, indicating that they are a class above the *fallaḥāt*. Both the *fallaḥāt* and *muḥaggabāt* prefer plain, dark stockings. Only one of the *baladī* respondents was *muḥaggabah*; the others preferred to wear the usual black *gallābīyāt* and *mandīlāt*.

In contrast, the majority of *Sa'īdī* women preferred not only bright colored *gallabīyāt*, but ones with very large floral designs. Their scarves (*shāl*), which are actually more like shawls, are also brightly colored and patterned. These shawls also have tasselled fringes and various other decorations within the fabric as well as added onto it. Shawls can be made of thin or heavy material, depending on the season and the modesty of the woman. Their clothing is generally made of cotton, though some is cotton-polyester blend. These women are mocked by other Egyptians for being "gaudy" and "cheap", particularly in regions outside the *Sa'īd*. Interestingly, the one of the educated *Sa'īdī* respondents was *muḥaggabah*, and avoided bright and patterned clothing, while the other one wore bright-colored modern Western clothing and no head cover. The uneducated *Sa'īdī* respondents did not wear their *shāl*, but adopted the transparent scarves (*mandīlāt*) of the local *baladī* women in Cairo. While they did wear patterned cotton *gallābīyāt*, they were not bright colors, though they were old and faded, so it was difficult to ascertain their original color. Nevertheless, they seemed to be dampening their *Sa'īdī* appearance and blending in with the local *baladī* women, perhaps to avoid negative discrimination.

> In Upper Egypt, we wear dresses with lots of flowers and designs and some women will wear these bright colored stockings. In Cairo, women from Upper Egypt will not wear bright colored stockings because women here do not do that. Women here seem to have their noses up in the air. In the countryside, so long as women are covered, they can wear any color or design they like. I like colorful outfits. But in Cairo, women wear dark, conservative colors, but then they are not covered and don't look decent. It doesn't make any sense to me. (Respondent #31)

Nubian women wear their own traditional dresses with long shawls, which no other Egyptian group would wear. Traditionally, both the dress and shawl were bright colors --

particularly red, pink, and orange -- and often had small floral patterns. The shawl can be of opaque or transparent material. Today it is also common to see the dresses and shawls made with muted colored fabrics, beige, light brown, and pastel colors. Traditionally, these costumes were made of cotton, but increasingly they are made of cotton-polyester blends. Nubian women are also fond of wearing large, bright-colored satin scarves for special occasions. Today, some Nubians continue to wear only their traditional costumes; however, while some wear them sometimes, they also wear the *gallābīyāt* of the *fallaḥāt* and even cheap Western-style clothing. Educated middle class Nubians are increasingly wearing Western clothing, though some are also becoming *muḥaggabāt*. None of the Nubian respondents wore traditional Nubian clothing, preferring to blend into the urban Cairo scene wearing a combination of cheap Asian imported Western-style polyester clothing, cotton *gallābīyāt*, and colorful polyester scarves; all made sure to cover their entire body and all their hair. While they did not wear patterned clothing in general, they did wear bright colors.

Each bedouin tribe in Egypt has its own distinctive dress for women. Generally, they are full-length with long sleeves, primarily black with a large portion of the front of the dress being red with elaborate embroidery. Coins, beads, and other decorative items are also attached to the dresses, long scarves (*ṭarḥah/ṭawārah*), and shawls (*shāl*). It is common for bedouin women to wear various types of face veils, depending on the tribe and the age of the woman. Transparent veils (*burqah*) covering the entire face are usually red in color. Transparent veils (*latham*, ʻ*uqāl*) covering the nose and mouth, usually hanging down from mid-forehead, are usually red or yellow. Some ʻ*uqāl* are made of leather pieces strung together vertically. Bedouin women wearing this attire are seen in Cairo, though they are a tiny minority of women there. Only one of the respondents had been a bedouin, though she became a city dweller as Cairo expanded into her traditional habitat. She no longer wore traditional bedouin clothing, adopting *baladī* attire instead. She wore only black cotton *gallābīyāt* and black, transparent polyester *mandīlāt*.

With the abundance of cheap Western-style clothing imported from Asia, it is becoming more common for children and young people of all social classes to wear brightly colored and patterned casual clothing, even amongst the *fallahūn* (peasants). Some lower-middle class women wear brightly colored and even patterned Western clothing, though plain clothing is preferred. In general, this clothing is made from cheap polyester, though some is a cotton-polyester blend and rayon is becoming increasingly common.

Upper-middle and upper class women, including some of the respondents, usually wear Western-style clothing imported from Western Europe and the U.S.A. Generally, this clothing is made of wool, which is very commonly worn in the winter; however, silk, satin, rayon, and high-end polyester are also worn. In general, cotton is avoided as its association as an indigenous Egyptian product means that it has low status in Egypt. Ironically, the best quality cotton fabric is exported to Europe and North America and it is difficult to find good quality cotton clothing in Egypt. These elite women tend to avoid bright colored clothing and clothing with large patterns, though they do wear bright colored, patterned blouses. Their outfits are usually the latest in Western fashions and are augmented with color-coordinated accessories, including purse, shoes, nylon stockings, scarf, jewelry, and hair accessories.

During the 1980's, a significant number of middle class women adopted the *ḥigāb* and became *muḥaggabāt*, though this uniform of political Islam is opposed by the government. Aside from the *muḥaggabāt*, middle class women, including many of the respondents, generally wear Egyptian-made Western-style clothing. Most of it is plain and pastel in color, though they do wear bright-colored and patterned blouses. During the winter they wear wool, and during the summer they wear clothing made of polyester or rayon. They aspire to wear clothing imported from the U.S. and Western Europe, which is readily available in Cairo, though they are generally unable to afford it. Those who have relatives abroad usually request gifts of Western-made clothing, particularly wool and silk, because they are luxuries for them which enhance their social status.

This tendency to adopt Western fashions is often linked to the *k̲h̲awāgah* complex, particularly if the woman's lifestyle is also considered Westernized. Egyptians, particularly the middle class, are conflicted about this. Is it "good" or "bad"? Does it constitute "authentic" Egyptian identity or cultural imperialism? The following comments characterize respondents' beliefs about this *k̲h̲awāgah* complex:

> This is how Egyptians would like to look, but it is not the way they do look. These people look very European. This is the "*k̲h̲awāgah* complex". Because of our cosmopolitan history, we don't have a national dress. We've had all kinds of influences. We seem to want to associate with Europeans. (Respondent #51 for photo #7)
>
> People like to do what the foreigners are doing. They think that what the foreigners who are richer and higher class do are higher class than Egyptians, and they want to imitate them. Foreigners have higher status and higher class, and of course, higher income than most Egyptians. Most Egyptians look up to foreigners. (Respondent #19 for photo #1)
>
> This is obviously a foreign film because Egyptians don't look like this and they don't dress like this. It's ok for foreigners to look like this, dress like this, but not for Egyptians...Egyptian women would not dress like this. (Respondent #27 for photo #22)

Thus, social class, education, region, ethnicity, age, marital status, and interpretation of Islam are all salient factors influencing the type of attire worn not only by the respondents themselves, but by all Egyptian women.

II. Make-Up and Accessories

In addition to clothing, respondents discussed the use of make-up and accessories as important markers of a woman's status and roles. They were also particularly salient in determining whether the character of a woman was "good" or "evil", though the importance of character is discussed at length in Chapter Six. The type of make-up and/or accessories worn are visible indicators of a woman's social class, education, age, marital status, and region of origin. They are extremely important elements reflecting appropriate versus inappropriate gender identity for women. The steeply hierarchical nature of Egyptian society is evident in these determinations of class, gender, and character through evaluation of make-up and accessories. Furthermore, there are striking distinctions in how Egyptian versus foreign women use make-up and accessories.

A. Make-Up

Virtually all the respondents agreed that "too much" make-up is unacceptable and identifies a woman as a prostitute and/or belly dancer, the two most negative female roles constituting the lowest status and social class. Most of the respondents believed that some light-colored lipstick is acceptable, and some believed that eyeliner and eyebrow pencil are acceptable. Most respondents believed that rouge is unnecessary and unacceptable, and many also believed that to be the case for eye shadow. The *muḥaggabāt*, however, agreed unanimously that women should not wear any make-up whatsoever in public because it draws attention to their physical beauty; the *muḥaggabāt* believed that only the woman's husband should see her with make-up on because only he is supposed to enjoy her beauty. The following are some comments made by respondents about the make-up on the woman depicted in the billboard ad for an Egyptian-made soap (photo #4):

> They have a face with all this make-up on it. They should have a very pure face to have an ad for soap. This one is very bad, make-up, she doesn't look like having a washed face at all...Still, they have to have a very seductive face. (Respondent #16)
>
> This woman has too much make-up on. They do this just to attract attention. Egyptians will make fun of this. I prefer her to have no make-up on for the ad. It would be better. (Respondent #29)
>
> [The] [m]ake-up is too much. I don't wear so much make-up like this. In our religion, we must not wear any make-up, except maybe when we are alone with our husband, but not for others. It is forbidden. (Respondent #6)
>
> If I wear make-up now with my *ḥigāb*, I will be criticized by people in the mosque and on the streets: "Do I want to attract men? Why do I wear make-up with the *ḥigāb*?" (Respondent #29)

Some respondents also took into account whether or not the women depicted in the billboards wore make-up, and if so, how much make-up to determine whether she was Egyptian or foreign. Again, the preference for European features is also evident in respondents' comments, such as :

> She is very beautiful, especially her eyes, but her make-up is too much. She doesn't look like an Egyptian. She looks foreign. (Respondent #30 for photo #4)

This comment combines several components to determine, not only whether or not the woman depicted in the billboard is Egyptian, but also whether she meets the ideal beauty image:

> She looks Egyptian, but she should wear less make-up. I don't like this woman's expression. It's not nice. Her face is also too large. She's not pretty. (Respondent #36 for photo #4)

Interestingly, some of the respondents said that Egyptians wear more make-up than foreigners.

> I think the Egyptian woman likes make-up. We invented it during the Pharaonic times and women here wear much make-up...No one here thinks of a face being fresh without make-up, as they do in Europe. For them here, make-up is not something that clogs up the pores or is bad for the skin. They see it as necessary. (Respondent #51 for photo #4)

> She is very pretty but she doesn't look like an Egyptian. It's strange, though, because she has very heavy make-up on. Foreigners do not wear heavy make-up like some Egyptians. Heavy make-up on a foreign face does not make sense...Foreign women are more beautiful than Egyptian women. (Respondent #31 for photo #4)

Some respondents also remarked that make-up has always been integral to Egyptian identity, particularly for women, since Pharaonic times. (The Pharaonic use of make-up by men, however, is opposed by all Egyptian women, including the respondents.) Hence, it is difficult for Egyptian women to give up despite the insistence of many Muslim clerics that the use of make-up is unIslamic.

> I think the Egyptian woman likes make-up. We invented it during the Pharaonic times and women here wear much make-up...No one here thinks of a face being fresh without make-up, as they do in Europe. For them here, make-up is not something that clogs up the pores or is bad for the skin. They see it as necessary. (Respondent #51 for photo #4)

All the respondents concurred that too much make-up is indicative of being a prostitute and/or belly dancer, and hence, of being uneducated and of low class. Most of the women conceded that most actors and singers wear too much make-up.

> ...[S]he has too much make-up on for a decent woman. It is not acceptable in Islam to wear so much make-up...I don't like her look. All the colors are too heavy, too dark. (Respondent #44 for photo #4)

> [A woman who wears a lot of make-up is a prostitute or dancer], especially if it s showy or exaggerated. Women going to work don't have to wear this make-up. Maybe at night if you are going to visit someone or a public place, you may use some make-up, but not so heavy like this. This exaggeration gives a bad impression. When we see someone wearing a lot of make-up, we think she is a dancer or a prostitute. Dancers have low social status. (Respondent #25 for photo #14)

Thirty-three (64.7%) of the respondents wore lipstick and some eye make-up, particularly eye-liner, in public. None wore rouge or foundation and few wore eye shadow. The *muḥaggabāt* did not wear make-up because it is against their religious beliefs, and neither did the *fallaḥāt*, because they could not afford to buy it. Cosmetics are still a major industry in Egypt, and even the majority of uneducated Egyptian women wear kohl (*kuhl*), usually mixed up themselves from local ingredients as they have done since Pharaonic days. Middle and upper class women, however, prefer to buy European and American cosmetics, which are extremely expensive by Egyptian standards. In addition, the increased cost of cosmetics and declining standard of living has reduced the use of make-up.

> Women used to wear a lot of make-up, but they use less now because it has become very expensive and we can't afford it. I wore make-up when I got married. If I wear make-up now with my *ḥigāb*, I will be criticized by people in the mosque and on the streets: "Do I want to attract men? Why do I wear make-up with the *ḥigāb*?" (Respondent #29)

While these comments about the use of make-up appear to be similar to those held by Western women, Egyptian women in general tolerate much more eye make-up than most Western women. Perhaps this is the legacy of Pharaonic emphasis on highlighting the eyes with make-up.

B. Jewelry

The respondents used the type of jewelry worn by women depicted in the billboard ads as another factor in determining whether the woman was "good" or "evil" as well as her class. In fact, both region and class -- and hence, education -- are important in determining what is appropriate for a "good" woman. Some middle class respondents said that large, chunky costume jewelry is fashionable and fine to wear, though others disagreed, saying that it is low class and *baladī*. This probably reflected a split between those who associated fashion jewelry with the West and those who associated it as an indigenous habit of the uneducated. All of the poor *Sa 'īdī* respondents liked this *baladī* chunky costume jewelry, but the two educated, rich *Sa 'īdī* women did not. The older Nubian respondent liked the *baladī* jewelry, but the younger Nubian respondents did not, perhaps reflecting their desire to distance themselves socially from low class Nubian and *baladī* women. At least thirty (58.9%) of the respondents strongly disliked this type of chunky costume jewelry, considering it *baladī*, cheap, and vulgar. About ten (19.6%) of the women thought it was all right, and seven (13.7%) were not sure but thought it acceptable, while four (7.8%) were not sure but thought it was unacceptable. The following comments illustrate these various opinions regarding chunky costume jewelry:

> Her jewelry is too much, a bit too *baladī*, but that seems to be the style for singers these days. Even in Europe, they wear such things. They want attention and to stick out and be seen. Maybe she has such a tiny little voice that they have to do this to be noticed. (Respondent #52 for photo #25)

> She looks likes singer or a dancer here. This clunky jewelry is typical for them. It looks cheap. (Respondent #3 for photo #25)

> Her jewelry is ok for this kind of people [entertainers], but I would never buy something like this. It looks *baladī*. It's not civilized. You know, African women, most of them, wear things

> like this, very big necklaces. It don't like this at all. (Respondent #47 for photo #25)

All respondents agreed that gold (preferably 22 karat) earrings, bracelets, and necklaces were acceptable for all women to wear.[5] Most Egyptian women also wear gold anklets, though only the uneducated wear the traditional ones; some educated Egyptian women wear thin gold chains around their ankles, much like some Western women. Today, as well as traditionally, most Egyptian women receive gold jewelry as part of the *mahr* (bride price) as well as from friends and relatives for some rites of passage. For most women, their gold represents their only hedge against misfortune. Thus, it is not surprising that all the respondents commented that they would prefer to see women depicted in the billboard ads wearing plain gold jewelry rather than costume jewelry.

Upper-middle and upper class women also wear jewelry with precious and semi-precious stones. The traditional stones worn since Pharaonic days include turquoise (*fayrūz*) and star sapphire, both of which are believed to ward off the "evil eye".[6] In addition, diamonds are now popular and all the other precious and semi-precious stones can be found set in jewelry. Rubies, for instance, are commonly set around turquoise. The following comments by respondents indicate their preference for gold jewelry with precious and semi-precious stones:

> If her jewelry is gold, I like it; otherwise, I don't. It is too big, though, too *baladī*. (Respondent #20 for photo #25)

> She looks like a local woman, like a *fallaḥah*, with this big necklace. Warda's (photo #26) is big, but not as big as Nadia's (photo #25). Warda's is like crystal or gold. Nadia's is like beads, like *baladī* jewelry. Nadia's jewelry doesn't look expensive. Warda's is shining like crystal. (Respondent #30)

> Her jewelry is nice. I heard always that Warda never wears false jewelry, always the real one. I hear that she is very, very rich. She behaves herself in public. I think that King Farūq gave her many things and jewelry. (Respondent #48 for photo #26)

Jewelry worn by women depicted in the billboard ads tended to be either very large, chunky costume jewelry or gold bracelets, earrings, and necklaces; however, the gold jewelry was worn by *baladī* women and the amount worn was far in excess of what a *baladī* woman would possess, let alone wear. *Muḥaggabāt* women, including those respondents who were *muḥaggabāt*, believed that jewelry worn by a woman should be seen only by her husband, parents, and children, because, as an ornament, it draws attention to her body. All the respondents believed that the excessive amount of gold jewelry worn by *baladī* women and the excessively large and flashy jewelry depicted in the billboard ads indicated that the women wearing it were singers, actors, or dancers, and most likely also prostitutes. In other words, this type of jewelry was indicative of the "evil" woman, not the "good" woman.

> I think she is try[ing] to be more modern here. Maybe she is trying to be Western, but she has *baladī* jewelry on. I think she is trying to look high class like rich Western woman, but

> this is not successful here. (Respondent #10 for photo #34)

> This is more lower-middle class, not really middle class but someone trying to be middle class. The way she is standing is not typical of middle class, though...She [Fī fī 'Abdū] is trying to look middle class by wearing these clothes, but it doesn't work because she isn't from that class...She may even be trying to look upper class. You see these bracelets she is wearing, this is an indication of not being upper class. *Baladī* women wear most of their gold in bracelet form on their arms. This is security for them. Really rich women would not wear this type of bracelet. Really rich women would wear gold linked bracelets with precious stones, and beautiful jewelry, not just gold. This is a pure indicator of her origin here. It's not *chic*. People of all classes wear gold, but what type of gold, what design, how you wear it, etc., this all indicates your class. (Respondent # 26 for photo #34)

C. Hair Accessories

Another aspect of attire which was very controversial amongst the respondents is the use of hair accessories. The respondents reported that the type of hair accessories used indicates class as well as whether the woman is "good" or "evil". The *muḥaggabāt*, of course, would not reveal their hair in public, so their use of hair accessories would be solely within the confines of their household and the company of their spouse, and perhaps children, parents, and siblings. Aside from the question of whether a woman should cover her hair, there is the question of what a woman can put in her hair. Egyptian women wear many bright colored hair accessories, but distinction is made between those indicating the woman is "good" versus "evil".

Two billboard ads (photos #7 and #11) depicted women with flowers in their hair. One ad (photo #7) was of a woman in a Western bridal dress and veil, *albeit* a rather old-fashioned and unattractive one which none of the respondents liked. The flowers appeared to be made of fabric and part of the decoration on the front of the veil, framing the face. Thirty (58.8%) respondents said that Egyptian women do not wear flowers in their hair, even as brides. Three (5.9%) respondents said that some Egyptian brides wear flowers in their hair. Another respondent wore fresh flowers in her hair when she was married in 1991. Yet another, older respondent said that during the British colonial era, particularly during the 1940's, many middle class Egyptian brides wore flowers in their hair. One woman said that she thought the image in the billboard was "modern *baladī*", meaning that the bride and groom were lower class people with some education who were trying to be modern, and so imitated Western wedding attire. Many of the respondents commented that the flowers in this particular billboard ad (photo #7) did not look real and were ugly, that the bridal dress and veil were ugly and old-fashioned, and that no Egyptian would wear such an outfit -- neither the rich nor the poor.[7] There was great variation and even confusion amongst respondents as to what constitutes authentic Egyptian identity in terms of hair accessories for women, particularly at weddings, as reflected in these comments about this ad (photo #7):

> Nowadays, people wear everything and anything at weddings. One can never tell where they get their ideas from One can't tell anymore what is Egyptian and what is not. It's all mixed

> up. (Respondent #1)
>
> Nowadays, they put silk handkerchiefs in the groom's pockets and the women wear tiaras. I had flowers in my hair, but that was a bit of an older custom. (Respondent #33)
>
> We got married in 1940 and people used to put flowers in the woman's hair and one flower in the man's lapel. I think this was a habit even back in the 1920's and 1930's...The bride usually wears a small tiara rather than only flowers now. This must be an old picture or a foreign one...[T]his is very old-fashioned. No one dresses like this for weddings anymore, not in Egypt. (Respondent #32)
>
> No, they do not look like Egyptians. Egyptians [men] do not put flowers in their coats. Some Egyptian women do put flowers in their hair. Maybe this woman gave him a flower from her hair because she is so happy with him. (Respondent #31)
>
> Also, these flowers in the woman's hair are not well done. They don't really look like flowers. I don't think we would wear flowers in our hair, anyway...Poor people would not wear this Western style. (Respondent #16)
>
> Also, we don't put flowers in the woman's hair...They do not look like flowers...[T]his...place must be for uneducated people, really, not for us. (Respondent #4)
>
> The typical Egyptians are farmers and poor and they cannot afford this. They wouldn't put flowers in their coat or hair. (Respondent #17)

The other billboard image of a woman with flowers in her hair (photo #11) was of a famous showgirl, Sharihān, who played a dancer in a historical play. She had six large, red flowers, which were probably fabric, arranged in an arc from her right ear across the top of her head. All of the respondents referred to them as "flowers", not as a hair piece or a hat. Most respondents said that Egyptian women never wear flowers in their hair, though some said that dancers sometimes do so. Forty (78.4%) respondents said that the flowers were acceptable as part of a dancer's costume. Four (7.8%) respondents disliked the idea of women putting flowers in their hair, even dancers, and saw it not only as a foreign practice but a sign of immorality because it was associated with a public display of sexuality and seductiveness. Four (7.8%) other women said that the flowers were unacceptable because they were too decorative, and one woman said that the flowers were too *baladī*, indicating that only lower class, illiterate women would wear them. The fact that the flowers were large and red in color would also be indicative of the woman being a prostitute, and hence, an "evil" woman. While it is true that entertainers frequently wear elaborate hair accessories, including flowers, few Egyptians would do so in public. Those who do tend to be lower-middle class women wearing cheap Asian-imported Western clothes, trying to appear sophisticated in their imitation of Western women. The following comments from respondents reflect the diversity of opinion on the subject of flowers in a woman's hair:

> The flowers and jewelry here [make her] look like a dancer, even a Mexican dancer. (Respondent #47)

> The jewelry and flowers are very nice and indicate that she is a dancer on *Sharīah* Muhammad 'Alī. (Respondents #43 & #46)

> I think she is dressed up like the part she is playing. It seems appropriate. I like it because it is appropriate for the story and attractive, too. I like the jewelry and flowers. (Respondent #38)

One billboard image (#31 and #33) of an actress (Nadia al-Gindī) portrayed as a prostitute and dancer, in an Egyptian remake of "Irma Laduce" ("*Khamsah Bāb*"), wore a decorative hair accessory which was common in both Egypt and the West during the 1920's. It would not be worn in Egypt or in the West today as it would seem too old-fashioned; however, the film was set in the 1940's when it may still have been worn by some dancers. Respondents who were morally opposed to entertainers in general disliked this hair accessory, as they disliked everything else about the ad, but those who either enjoyed or tolerated such entertainment believed that the hair accessory suited the story, even if they found other aspects of the ad objectionable. No Egyptian woman, however, would wear such a hair accessory; to do so would be tantamount to being a prostitute (*sharmūṭah*). Thus, it seems that the respondents linked hair accessories worn by entertainers, particularly dancers, as an indication of being both low class and a prostitute -- the archetypal "evil" woman.

> I think the flowers, jewelry, and hairstyle are appropriate for the part she plays; otherwise, I don't like them. (Respondent #40 for photo #11)

> I don't like the flowers in her hair at all...Maybe if this is necessary to portray dancers in Muhammad 'Alī Street, it is ok; otherwise, it is not. (Respondent #39 for photo #11)

This current disdain for hair decorations is quite far from the Pharaonic habit of women adorning their hair with all sorts of elaborate hair pieces as well as enormous, complex hats and crowns. In Pharaonic times, women commonly wore flowers, diadems, circlets, hair-bands, hair-rings, and hair-weights as good luck charms, protection from the "evil eye", and to depict their social status. Large lumps of melting tallow perfumed with myrrh were also worn on top of the head, whose purpose was to prevent hair dryness as well as to decorate the hair (Mertz, 1966:85-105; Tyldesley, 1994:158). The origin of the current disdain for hair accessories is probably in the Islamic belief that women are not supposed to draw attention to their "ornaments" (their body, including the hair), and hence, not supposed to adorn themselves for anybody but their own husbands. Obviously, for *muhaggabāt*, hair accessories, if worn, would not be visible because their hair would be completely covered.

D. Sunglasses

All the women interviewed considered wearing sunglasses to be a Western, not an Egyptian habit; however, thirty-five (68.6%) of the respondents wore sunglasses and six (11.8%) others liked them but did not wear them, primarily because they were too expensive. Most of the respondents who wore sunglasses had expensive European designer brands which they obtained when visiting the West or from relatives in the West because they believed that most of the sunglasses sold in Egypt were less attractive than those in the West. Nine (17.6%) women were totally opposed to sunglasses because they considered sunglasses foreign attire; most of them had little or no education and expressed the belief that Egyptian women are strong and used to the sun, so wearing sunglasses is for "weak" foreigners. They were also strongly opposed to Egyptian women imitating Europeans by wearing sunglasses. Nevertheless, most respondents acknowledged that, increasingly, young women with high school education aspire to wear sunglasses. All the comments made by respondents in this section refer to the ad for eyeglasses depicting a woman wearing sunglasses (photo #8).

> Many middle class Egyptians wear sunglasses now. I got mine in Austria. (Respondent #2)
>
> Myself, I think these sunglasses are ok, but mine are much better. My sister brought them for me from Sa'udi and they are really from West Germany. Those ones [in the ad] are not so *chic*. Anyway, most Egyptians do not wear sunglasses. (Respondent #5)
>
> Girls in particular like to get sunglasses these days. (Respondent #24)
>
> People are starting to wear sunglasses here. It's very important to wear sunglasses to protect your eyes from the sun. It catches people's attention to have the sunglasses on the woman. (Respondent #34)
>
> I think they want us to think she is Jackie Onasis. Egyptians don't wear sunglasses, so to advertise for eyeglasses this is not a good idea...I myself, I wear sunglasses. I am used to this, but for most Egyptians, it is not our habit. (Respondent #32)
>
> They [sunglasses] are ok, not the best. I think they have sunglasses on this woman to attract attention. Most Egyptians do not wear sunglasses, even though our sun is very strong. You find mostly it is foreigners here who wear sunglasses. I think her sunglasses are ok, but not the most *chic*. (Respondent #16)
>
> If they want to sell eyeglasses, they should show some attractive ones in the ad, not these awful sunglasses. Most Egyptians do not wear sunglasses, anyway. The foreign ones are very nice but they are too expensive for most Egyptians. (Respondent #21)
>
> I never used sunglasses. There is nothing wrong with my eyes and I don't need eyeglasses, either...[W]e don't use sunglasses. The sun doesn't bother me, so I would never use sunglasses. (Respondent #31)
>
> ...Egyptians generally do not wear sunglasses. Most people cannot even afford eyeglasses. (Respondent #3)
>
> No, really, most people in Egypt do not wear sunglasses. This is for foreigners. Maybe they are not used to our sun. Egyptians do not buy them. (Respondent #44)

Interestingly, eight (15.7%) respondents believed that the image of the woman wearing sunglasses in one billboard ad (photo #8) was frightful and awful. They believed that the woman was blind and they expressed some strong sentiments about blind people: that they never smile, and, therefore, have no feelings, and that their mouth is usually open, indicating wickedness (being sexually provocative). These beliefs are deeply rooted, having their origin in ancient Egyptian culture and having been reinforced by Arab beliefs introduced with Islam.[8]

> She looks like a blind one. The glasses are for blind ones. I am depressed when I see this picture. (Respondent #50)
>
> This one looks as if she is blind. Her glasses are so dark. Although she smiles and she looks happy, it isn't a good ad. You would think that she is blind. (Respondent #18)
>
> ...[I]t looks as if she is blind. She has no feelings. You know, blind people have no feelings and they smile at nothing. She has no feelings and what is she smiling at? Nothing. She is opening her mouth in a wicked way; y'ani, she is not smiling. She is pretending to be smiling. (Respondent #8)

This fear of blind people is ancient in Egypt and results from the serious eye diseases which have been endemic since Pharaonic times. Male musicians, for instance, were often depicted as blind in Pharaonic art. Foreign travellers visiting Egypt through the millennia have noted blindness as a common affliction amongst the Egyptians. Although eye diseases can be better treated today because of advances in medicine, they still represent a major health hazard for the vast majority of Egyptians, who still, rightly so, fear blindness.

Somewhat related to these beliefs about blindness is the ancient Egyptian belief that eye contact is necessary to determine a person's character. This belief was also held by pre-Islamic Arabian tribes and survives to the present throughout the Middle East. If a person is lying, it is believed that the dilation of his/her pupils will change or flicker. Thus, people who avoid direct eye contact are believed to be lying and/or of disreputable character, and even "evil". Such people would be avoided.

> She must wear eyeglasses, not black [sunglasses]. We must see her eyes -- [to see if] they are not beautiful or beautiful or good or no good. (Respondent #20)

In addition, almost all of the respondents commented that it was not appropriate to have a woman wearing sunglasses in an ad for eyeglasses. They did not like this ad since most Egyptian women do not wear sunglasses and would not associate the ad with a shop for prescription eyeglasses, as well as because they believed the sunglasses depicted were not *chic*.

> If they want to sell eyeglasses, they shouldn't put sunglasses on her or at least they should put eyeglasses in the picture in a nice display. (Respondent #1)

Thus, as respondents reported, the Egyptian response to sunglasses is mixed. In terms of the ideal beauty image, fashionable, Western sunglasses were acceptable to about 80% of the respondents, but they were definitely considered foreign and associated with being *chic*, being European. The 20% of respondents who were opposed to wearing sunglasses because they are foreign, and hence, not part of Egyptian attire, probably represents the norm amongst the majority of Egyptians.

E. Hats

Closely related to hair accessories is another aspect of attire, hats. Do Egyptian women wear hats? Only four billboard ads depicted a woman wearing a hat, a tiny percentage of the billboards, but virtually all of the respondents commented at length about the hats.[9] Furthermore, the respondents used a greater number of categorizations for identifying gender and nationality in response to the hats in these billboard ads than they did for most of the ads. Class, nationality and being a "good" versus an "evil" woman were certainly central to the respondents' comments about women wearing hats, but so, too, were their feelings about Egypt's colonization by Europeans. Because so many other combinations of factors were also used, a greater number of examples of the respondents' comments are provided in this section to serve as a conclusion to the elements of attire which are central to the Egyptian notion of ideal beauty and femininity, and their linkage to Egyptian versus foreign identity.

Most respondents categorically denied that Egyptian women wear or should wear hats. In general, wearing hats was associated with European women, particularly English women. Some respondents said that some rich Egyptian women wore hats during the colonial days to imitate Western fashions. Some respondents said that some middle class Egyptian women wear casual hats on the beach these days. Some respondents also mentioned that some middle and upper class young girls and university students wear casual wear and Western sports caps at private clubs, usually with blue jeans or trousers, but that this was not commonly seen in the streets. Some respondents said that some Egyptian women are now wearing hats to imitate Europeans, as part of the *k̲h̲awāgah* complex. Only one respondent, an upper-middle class woman, sometimes wore hats. The following are representative comments made by the respondents about the hats in the billboard ads.

This first set of comments simply identifies a woman wearing a hat as a foreigner, since Egyptian women do not wear hats.

> She could be Egyptian, but because of this hat, I think she is a foreigner. (Respondent #10 for photo #1)
>
> The hat looks ridiculous here. Who would wear a hat like this in Egypt? Egyptian women do not wear hats, for one thing. (Respondent #19 for photo #21)

A few of the respondents indicated that although wearing hats is not an Egyptian habit, some Egyptian women might wear a casual hat on the beach. This, however, would be seen on middle and upper-middle class women, whom others would consider to have a *k̲h̲awāgah* complex, that is, they imitate Westerners.

> The only place you would see a hat like this is maybe at the beach. No Egyptian would wear any kind of hat, even on the beach. (Respondent #28 for photo #1)

> I don't know if she's Egyptian. I don't know if Egyptians wear this kind of hat...That's why I told you it is not Egyptian. This type of hats is [sic] not popular here. Some people wear it, but they are not popular. I wear hats but only in Alexandria, when it goes with the other outfit, on the beach. We need hats in this hot weather. Young children usually wear hats. When [my son]...was young, I usually put a hat on his head. He doesn't need one now because he has a lot of hair. (Respondent #25 for photo #1)

Some respondents indicated that some middle and upper-middle class Egyptian women might wear hats, probably casual hats, in private country clubs, as indicated in the following comments:

> She might be drinking this in a [country] club. Some Egyptian women wear hats in the [private country] clubs. (#32 for photo #1)

> A hat like this would only be worn by foreigners or in the [private country] club or at the seashore or maybe walking around the pyramids. Egyptians don't wear hats. (#32 for photo #20)

In addition to the fact that Egyptians do not wear hats, many of the respondents were puzzled about the connection between the hats and the clothing worn by the woman in the billboard ads. They generally found the hats inappropriate for the type of casual clothing worn or advertised, and wondered if perhaps a formal, European hat was used in one such ad (photo #20) to conjure images of *chic*, high quality, European clothing to attract middle and upper-middle class women. Others thought that this was simply another example of inaccurate and inappropriate copying of foreign habits, as evidenced in the *khawāgah* complex.

> This woman is not Egyptian at all...The hat is stupid. Why is it here? It's floating around and Egyptians don't even wear hats. Maybe they use a foreign woman to make us think that this is a foreign blanket. People prefer to buy foreign-made things rather than Egyptian ones. (Respondent #33 for photo #21)

> This woman with this hat stands for high class and high quality and implies classy designs. It does seem out of place for casual wear. In fact, it is not appropriate at all. They are advertising for jeans and casual wear. No one dresses like this here...It's probably not her face that should attract us, but a woman with a hat. A woman with a hat like this implies a symbol for *chic* women, upper-middle class status, classy designs, exclusiveness, good quality. (Respondent #26 for photo #20)

Some respondents indicated that some Egyptians are beginning to wear hats but that it is a sign of the *khawāgah* complex. This imitation of Westerners is considered negatively by most of the respondents and as part of the love-hate relationship Egyptians have with Westerners by some of them.

> I can't tell if she is a foreigner or an Egyptian because her face is hidden behind the hat. I don't like her face hidden like this. Many Egyptians are starting to imitate foreign women and so maybe they are starting to wear hats, too. Anyway, I don't think this hat goes with casual clothes. I would never wear these casual clothes myself. I have always worn *gallābīyāt*. I would never wear a hat, either. (Respondent #41 for photo #20)

> Yes [this woman is Egyptian]. Egyptians now wear everything, even hats. One is never surprised anymore about what Egyptians do. It's true that this may be a foreigner, but Egyptians have high regard for foreigners and they will imitate them, even to wear hats. (Respondent #29 for photo #1)

Many respondents also commented that in addition to the fact that Egyptian women do not wear hats and the fact that the hats are not appropriate for the clothing worn, the women depicted in the ads wearing a hat do not have Egyptian features and hair and so are probably foreign women, hence, reinforcing the *k͟hawāgah* complex.

> She is very beautiful, but she is a foreigner...Her features are not Egyptian. The hat is strange. There is nothing extraordinary about it. Egyptian women do not wear hats, anyway. (#43 for photo #1)

> I can't see any connection between this woman who appears very European because of the hairstyle and the hat with the casual clothing which is being promoted. (#52 for photo #20)

> That hat over there is very stupid. Again, she is blonde -- the *k͟hawāgah* complex. Have you ever seen a hat on a woman here? I wear hats because I like to wear hats, but people here laugh at me. (#51 for photo #21)

Some respondents not only identified having European women wearing hats in ads as offensive, but Western women as being indecent and immoral, as evidenced in this comment:

> I always feel alienated by posters in Egypt that show European faces -- the hat and the movement. No Egyptian woman would wear a hat and no Egyptian woman would move her mouth like that. (#22 for photo #1)

Though many women dismissed hats as "foreign", many others identified hats more specifically as European attire. While most of the respondents said wearing hats is a British and French tradition, because the woman depicted in the Coca Cola billboard ad (photo #1) looked more Italian or Spanish, they did not associate the hat with Britain, despite the obvious imagery of a pith helmet. Nevertheless, there is a tension between disliking foreign habits and admiration, even imitation, of them reflected in some of these comments.

The first set of comments refers to wearing hats as a European habit.

> Yes, she is Egyptian, but she want[s] to look European, *yānī*. See, her dress is European, *chic*. The hat, of course, this is not Egyptian! It looks very stupid here, floating on the wall. (#37 for photo #21)

> Some Egyptians might wear hats, but this is a European thing more, I think. They see a lot of this on the media, European influences. Ever since a long time ago when Omar Sharīf was young, there was a lot of Western influence. In fact, I think the Western influence was more when my mom was young [1960's] than now, not only in the media, but in the streets, too. There was even more Western stuff and more open stuff in the past than now. (#17 for photo #1)

Some respondents believed that the woman depicted in the Coca Cola ad (photo #1) looked Italian, Spanish, or French, not Egyptian.

> I think this ad is Italian or Spanish, not Egyptian. See the spaghetti? Maybe she should eat *kusharī* in Egypt!...The design of the hat is very nice. (#48 for photo #1)

> No, I don't think she is [Egyptian]. Maybe she is Spanish or even Italian, but not Egyptian. We don't wear hats. This look[s] like a European hat. I don't like them to use foreigners for ads here in Egypt. It's not good for us. They must use Egyptian women. (#37 for photo #1)

In addition to believing that the woman depicted in the Coca Cola ad (photo #1) was Italian, Spanish, or French, some respondents also linked the hat to being rich and educated, to being part of the ruling elite.

> She must be educated and rich, but really, Egyptian women do not wear hats. Maybe she is Italian or French. (Respondent #5)

Finally, many respondents identified wearing hats as an English or British habit, associating it particularly with the queen and other wealthy women.

> No, Egyptian women never wear hats. This is a British habit, not Egyptian. Maybe she wants to look more European. Maybe they think the ad is more appealing if it looks sophisticated, European. *Ma'rafsh*, I really don't know. (#44 for photo #1)

> She's wearing a hat. Egyptian women do not wear hats. We usually see Queen Elizabeth with a hat, never without -- and different styles of hats, with feathers and men, also. Englishmen wear hats. (#18 for photo #1)

> This woman is not Egyptian. She is the English type. This hat does not go good with blue jeans. Maybe a Mexican hat will go with jeans, but not the classical hats like Diana and Elizabeth wear. In our country, the sun is so hot, but no one likes to wear hats. I don't know why, but that is the attitude of the people. In the U.K., they don't need hats, but they wear them; here, we need hats, but we don't wear them. I don't know why. (#47 for photo #20)

Interestingly, two respondents linked the habit of wearing hats as a European influence resulting from the capitulation of the old Turco-Albanian dynasties:

> She looks English because of the formal hat. No one wears these hats in Egypt since the [days of the] *khadīwīs*. (#21 for photo #20)

> In old Egypt, women were wearing hats. They were like this and different kinds. I mean during the *khadīwī* and king days. (Was that due to European influence or indigenous Egyptian?) European. Most Egyptians did not wear hats, only some and Europeans. (#24 for photo #20)

Two women presented a more complex interpretation of the Coca Cola ad (#1), recognizing the overtones of Egyptian seduction to European colonialism and the resulting love-hate response Egyptians still have towards the British. Both of these respondents were highly educated upper middle-class women.

> She look[s] like not Egyptian woman. She looks foreign from our country, not Egyptian. Maybe she is, uh, it is not clear, but this hat [is] not Egyptian, not found in Egypt...[I don't like this woman] because I think it is not from our environment or our country. It is [a] foreign woman...Some people prefer foreign woman and another prefer Egyptian woman...because foreign woman gives expression that Coca Cola is foreign, is not Egyptian, maybe, but everywhere we can use this drink. If they remove the hat and use an Egyptian woman, I still don't like the picture. (#14 for photo #1)

> I hate it intensely. It is designed to be seductive, not only for the product itself but for women and for subordination to Western capitalist hegemony. The caption, "Irresistible Feeling", with the woman eating spaghetti and holding Coke is disgusting, especially with the hat reminiscent of British pith helmets. It is sort of a love-hate relationship represented, but one which we are encouraged to embrace, not escape....I can't say what the motives are of those who created this ad. I can say that the message is clear to me. I think it is true for many Egyptians, yes, there is a sort of seduction to Western imperialism, a sort of love-hate relationship with the British in particular. It is sort of masochistic, isn't it? (#3 for photo #1)

Some respondents were confused because, although they linked hats to Europeans, the brand name, *Līna*, for the casual clothing being advertised in one of the billboard ads (photo #20), is not an Egyptian name. The respondents did not identify "Līna" as a European name, but as an "Arab" name.[10]

> The hat and the hair look foreign. "Līna" is an Arab name. Syrian, Lebanese, Palestinian, you find a lot of them using this name. It is not found in Egypt. I haven't met anyone with the name "Līna", though they are using names now that are not Egyptian, like "Dayna"...(#25 for photo #20)

Some respondents not only identified wearing hats as being a foreign habit, but believed that the entire ad itself was foreign in origin, whether the artist who devised the ad or the company advertising its products, as indicated in the following comments:

> ...She could be Egyptian, but we don't wear hats, you see. This is from some artist's imagination, not reality. (#52 for photo #21)

> Egyptians don't wear hats, so this is a silly picture. It is coming from foreign companies. (#28 for photo #20)

The most humorous responses for me as an outsider also reflected the standpoint of the respondents as Egyptian women, but from opposite ends of the class hierarchy. The first is an illiterate *Sa'īdī* woman and the other is a highly educated upper-middle class lawyer:

> Yes, I like the picture and she looks Egyptian. Egyptians are trying to imitate foreigners by wearing hats. Those women who can afford it, wear European clothes and learn European habits. In Upper Egypt, we aren't afraid of the sun. We are immune from everything, even the cold. We move around all the time so the sun doesn't bother us. Maybe if you are just standing in one place all day and not moving, the sun may be harmful, but for us, we are always moving around, and so the sun doesn't bother us. (#31 for photo #1)
>
> No, Egyptians would not wear a hat. They don't need hats here in Egypt. I know they use hats in Europe or America or Canada because it is very cold. (#34 for photo #1)

It appears that, as with hair accessories, hats ceased to be acceptable attire in Egypt after the demise of the ancient Egyptians. Early Christian concepts of women, probably influenced by Greek and Roman ideas about women, reinforced by Islam, have broken the Egyptian habit of women wearing elaborately decorated hair pieces, wigs, hats, and crowns. Egyptian women today do not wear hats and no longer consider it a part of Egyptian identity. Those who do are mocked for imitating foreigners (*khawāgah* complex) and/or considered low class and "evil."

III. Conclusion

Clearly, respondents varied greatly in their choice of attire, make-up, and accessories. The respondents' interpretation of religion (literal or liberal), class, social group, ethnicity, region of origin, education, age, marital status, and even parental status all influenced their beliefs and behavior. Many respondents said that they should adopt a more Islamically-correct attire, but did not want to do so until they were middle-aged. Others had changed their attire as a result of changes to their religious beliefs and/or as an accommodation to the hostility they faced in the public sphere, and some due to pressure from their husbands. Generally, upper-middle and upper class respondents were most liberal and most Westernized in their attire and willingness to use make-up and wear sunglasses. Some even wore hats occasionally. The lowest class women (*baladī*), were happy with their traditional attire, though one respondent had donned the *zīy al-Islāmī* uniform of the Islamic fundamentalists, partly out of desire to appear upwardly-mobile. They could not afford commercial make-up, though some expressed a desire to use it. They were opposed to wearing sunglasses or hats, viewing them as "foreign". The lower-middle class respondents were split: some wore cheap, Asian-imported Western-style clothing, *albeit* long skirts and sleeves, and usually a scarf while others wore the traditional *gallabīyah*. Some wore cheap, locally-made make-up and some wore cheap sunglasses. The older Nubian respondent wore traditional Nubian clothing sometimes and other times the traditional *gallabīyah*, and she preferred bright colors. The younger Nubians did not want to wear traditional Nubian clothing nor bright-colored attire because they tried to "fit" in with Cairene "Egyptians"; they also wore local make-up but not sunglasses. The lower class *Sa'īdī* women wore their traditional dress most of the time, though they occasionally wore the traditional *baladī galabīyah* and *mandīl* of Lower Egypt when they went out in order to "blend in", but could not afford make-up. They were the most opposed to wearing hats and sunglasses. The middle class was the most conflicted about attire, reflecting the extreme economic pressure they face and their fear of downward mobility. Most of the *muḫaggabah* respondents were middle class, and did not, of course, wear make-up. Only one wore sunglasses. The middle class *Sa'īdī* women did not wear traditional *Sa'īdī* dress nor bright colors, preferring to "blend in" with Cairene women; they did not wear make-up, hats, or sunglasses. The upper-middle class, well-educated *Sa'īdī*, however, wore fashionable Western clothing, make-up, and sunglasses indicating perhaps the salience of class.

The type and amount of attire, make-up, and accessories worn by a woman is extremely important in determining her social status and social roles. The differences amongst social groups today, however, are much greater than they were in ancient Egypt, when clothing, make-up, and accessories, while elaborate, were meant to decorate and reveal bodies, not conceal them. Today, women who wear a lot of make-up and accessories, particularly if their bodies are not fully covered, are stigmatized as "evil" and low class by those who support an Islamic fundamentalist paradigm of womanhood; but those who support a more Western-oriented, reformist Muslim paradigm of womanhood believe that it is a woman's right to wear make-up and accessories so long as her dress is "decent", that is, not too revealing. The confusion of Egyptian women about gender-appropriate attire, make-up, and accessories, however, is evidenced by the great ambivalence which some respondents felt about both of these competing paradigms of womanhood.

Chapter Five End Notes

1

The various Islamic fundamentalist groups are encouraging Egyptian men of all social classes to wear the traditional, Arab white *gallabīyah* as the proper attire for Muslim men. While some well educated men are adopting this attire, they are still distinguishable from the *fallahūn* whose *gallabīyāt* are very different.

Proper Muslim attire for women (*zīy al-Islāmī*), according to Islamic fundamentalists in Egypt, consists of a loose fitting full length dress with high neck and long sleeves covering the entire body, with no decoration, no pattern, and no belt. The *ḥigāb*, whether short or long, is also required to cover all the hair and neck, and it should not be decorated. Material used is not specified, but is usually unpatterned polyester. Women who adopt this "uniform" of the Islamic fundamentalists are called *muḥaggabah/muḥaggabāt*. It must also be noted that this "uniform" is not indigenous to Egypt and not considered to be "authentic" Muslim dress (*zīy al-Islāmī*) by Muslims who oppose the fundamentalists (Geadah, 1996).

2

See billboard ads in photographs #: 22, 31, 32, and 33.

3

See billboards depicted in photographs #: 3, 4, 15-16, and 18.

4

See Andrea B. Rugh (1986), Reveal and Conceal: Dress in Contemporary Egypt, for a more detailed discussion of variations in dress amongst various groups in Egypt.

5

Most Egyptians prefer 22 karat gold because it is the most pure, and hence, worth the most per karat; however, 18 karat and 14 karat gold is available. Ten karat gold is nearly impossible to find in Egypt and considered worthless. The primary purpose of gold jewelry is as a source of funds for financial emergencies. Generally, Egyptians prefer gold mixed with copper, so-called pink-gold or Egyptian gold; however, yellow gold and white gold are also available. In fact, jewelry made with the three colors of gold is very popular amongst the upper-middle and upper class women.

6

Star saphires are the traditional wedding stone amongst most of the European monarchs as well as throughout the Middle East and South Asia. *Khadīwī* 'Ismā'īl is buried in the crypt under 'Ibn Tulūn mosque in Old Cairo in a carved white marble sarcophogous which is "protected" by a series of enormous star saphires set around its perimeter.

7

The billboard depicting a bride and groom included a flower in the groom's lapel. Most respondents commented that this is a Western custom, not an Egyptian one. Three women commented that educated Egyptian men wore a flower in their lapel at weddings and other formal occasions during the 1940's, but not anymore because it is considered too old-fashioned. In any case, it is a custom associated with European colonization. Hence, most of the women were quite surprised that this would appear in ads today. That probably explains why most of them thought it was an "old" ad.

8

When the French and British colonized Egypt, they reported finding serious eye disease and blindness to be widespread. Indeed, many of the musicians depicted in ancient Egyptian tomb paintings were blind. Conjunctivitis and trachoma, referred to as Egyptian opthalmia or granular conjunctivitis by physicians, remains prevalent in Egypt, though a better understanding of these diseases, somewhat better hygiene, and better medical care have reduced the number of people blinded and reduced the incidence of contagion amongst the middle and upper classes. Nevertheless, the fear of blind people as sources of disease remains deeply rooted in Egyptian subconscious.

This is compounded by the common Egyptian belief that any terrible affliction, such as blindness, must have been a punishment by God for committing evil. Thus, blind people are commonly perceived as wicked. Most Egyptians would also believe that a blind person was responsible for his/her condition, that it was his/her own fault. So, to avoid evil and contagion by disease, blind people must be avoided and condemned by God-fearing people. See Egypt Health Net and Gallagher (1990) regarding serious health problems in Egypt.

9

The four billboard ads which depicted images of women wearing hats included those in photos #: 1, 20, 21, and 34.

10

There are three important points which can be made here. Not only did the respondents' take immediate notice of the **names** of women and/or brands depicted in the billboard ads to determine whether or not they were familiar with them, but also to determine whether it was an Egyptian or a foreign name. Furthermore, if the respondents were familiar with a particular person and/or brand, their subjective evaluation of the ad itself was determined by whether they liked the person and/or brand rather than by evaluating the actual ad.

A good example is provided by a billboard ad (photo #29) for a relatively new and not well known singer named 'Āyshah al-Wa'ad. While her first name is a very popular one throughout the Arab world, Egyptians would never spell it this way. As it appears in the ad, 'Āyshah is written in correct, classical Arabic. Egyptians, however, would write it 'Ayshah. This is the first indication that the woman depicted in the ad is not an Egyptian. The second indication of her being a foreigner is that her second name, which means "the promise", is one which would never be heard in Egypt. Therefore, every one of the respondents reacted to her name immediately, saying that "She must be a foreigner" whether they had heard of her before or not.

Another example is provided by respondents' reactions to the billboard ad (photo #25) for a singer named, Nadia Rushdī. Even though this name is a very common one in Egypt, as well as throughout the Arab world, her features are not Egyptian at all. In this instance, it was her features more than her name that respondents used to determine that she must be a foreigner. Even so, most respondents repeated her name over several times, wondering if it was Egyptian, prompted primarily by her foreign-looking face.

Two billboard ads were of very famous singers known to all the respondents, Sharīfa Fadl (photo #28) and Warda (photo #26). Despite the fact that both ads did not portray the singers in a very flattering manner and were, in fact, very unattractive overall, those respondents who liked the singer(s), liked the ad(s), while those who did not like the singer(s), did not like the ad(s). They did not distinguish between liking the singer and liking the actual ad. In the case of these two singers, one in her sixties and the other in her seventies, respondents did make note of the fact that although Warda has been living in Egypt for more than forty years, she is Algerian, not Egyptian.

Chapter Six
Gender and Character: The "Good" Versus "Evil" Woman

Too often the only actors of history are the recorders of history, not real people. Malcolm Azania (1998)

The first step to liberation is shedding the negative self-image and seeing oneself through the eyes and values of the oppressors. Christine Delphy (1997:29)

Goodbye to cigarette ads where poems should be...Goodbye to "post-feminism" from people who never say "post-democracy". Gloria Steinem (1994:125)

I. Introduction

After focussing on the physical body, clothing and adornment, respondents focussed on those aspects of femininity which related to **character**, whether a woman is a "good" woman or an "evil" woman. In addition to the factors discussed in Chapters Four and Five, respondents' determination of a woman's character was made by evaluation of body language, which included facial expression, pose, and sexuality. The use of drugs was also considered an important determinant of character. All of these factors were deemed significant in determining whether a woman is feminine or not, decent and moral ("good") or not ("evil"). In addition, respondents linked the character of a woman to the woman's role(s). They believed that a woman's character and social role(s) are inextricably intertwined. Women's roles, thus, are also divided between those of the "good" woman and those of the "evil" woman.

Somewhat related to the issue of character, respondents also distinguished between a "mannish" woman and a "womanly" woman as well as between an Egyptian woman and a foreign woman (*'afrangīyah/'agnabīyah*). As was discussed in Chapters Four and Five, the images of women in the billboard photographs used as a research instrument may have structured the interviewees' responses. Nevertheless, the resulting data still provide a comprehensive idea about the categories used by respondents to conceptualize female identity, in this case, character. The following sections are based not only on information provided by respondents' comments about the images of women depicted in billboard ads, but also on their responses to set questions about gender and gender roles, as well as in general dialogue with them about what is appropriate for Egyptian women. The data clearly show that evaluation of a woman was not only determined by her gender-appropriateness, but that, in fact, gender-appropriateness was associated with being a "good" woman. Virtually all the criteria used by respondents to discuss femininity were used with the intention of determining the woman's character: was she a "good" woman or an "evil" woman?

II. Personality Traits

Respondents often commented about the personality traits which they perceived to be projected by women depicted in billboard ads. This also became a central element in their discussions about their conceptualization of gender. The respondents all agreed that the following traits are considered positive feminine ones which are idealized for women in Egyptian society: soft, delicate, tender, nurturing, loving, warm, pleasant, sweet, shy, calm, self-effacing, deferential, submissive, dependent, humble, quiet, obedient, agreeable, happy, content, smiling, generous, kind, considerate, accommodating, polite, patient, sincere, honest, moral, chaste, innocent, pious, non-sexual, discreet, thrifty, hardworking, industrious, reliable. These, then, are the traits of the "good" woman in Egypt.

> *Yãnī*, girls in our society do not reveal their emotions, you see? Sometimes they are shy because our traditions do not permit them to do so. But boys do not care. (Respondent #18 for photo #23)
>
> She [Dalāl 'Abd-al-'Azīz] is a good actress and a good, soft woman. She is delicate. She is very beautiful and her body is good, too. (Respondent #48 for photo #14)
>
> I like this picture of the woman. She's very soft...like a princess. (Respondent #13 for photo #6)
>
> A lady must be kind and simple, humble and soft. (Respondent #38 for photo #13)

Nevertheless, many respondents believed that women should be assertive in order not to be taken advantage of sexually by men. Therefore, assertiveness, but not aggressiveness, was considered feminine by some of the women. Independence was also considered admirable by some women for similar reasons. Assertiveness and independence, however, are not considered feminine traits in general in Egypt. These beliefs were expressed in the following comments, typical of respondents' reactions to some of the billboards:

> She is very liberal. Even though she wears men's clothes, she acts very decently. I can relate to her. Samāh 'Anwār is comfortable in talking to men and she doesn't use heavy make-up...She is very open and direct. She deals with men and boys directly. She is assertive. She is not timid, like many girls. (Respondent #40 for photo #13)
>
> Samāh 'Anwār is a talented actor but most Egyptian women dislike her. She is assertive and even aggressive in her roles, somewhat tomboyish. (Respondent #21 for photo #13)
>
> This woman [Samāh 'Anwār] is known as a tomboy...We don't focus on her as a sex object...[She] is always dressed in trousers and jackets. She rides motorcycles and runs around like a tomboy. (Respondent #19 for photo #13)
>
> She [Samāh 'Anwār] is often criticized for dressing like a man, but many young women and girls are wearing blue jeans and leather jackets now. It's not unusual anymore to see women in such clothes. I usually wear trousers or tights myself. (Respondent #28 for photo #13)

All the respondents agreed that the following traits are not considered feminine, and are highly undesirable in women: domineering, bossy, angry, unsmiling, loud, boisterous, rowdy, disobedient, defiant, rude, impolite, unkind, insensitive, impatient, tough, hard, aggressive, too independent, too serious, stingy, selfish, conceited, lazy, dishonest, deceitful, insincere, unreliable, naughty, expressing affection in public, sexually provocative, sexual in public, unchaste, having premarital sex, unfaithful, and promiscuous. These are the traits, then, of the "evil" woman in Egypt.

> I love respect and commitment and this picture does not show such. I don't like her expression in her face. It should be like the woman above, more quiet, with more respect. (Respondent #14 for photo #14)
>
> Here, she [Laila 'Alwī] looks like a big shot, like she thinks she is some sort of boss. I don't like this attitude or this picture...She is on the verge of being vulgar. (Respondent #29 for photo #29)
>
> She [Samāh 'Anwār] act like a boy, and she look like a boy, too. I like her being equal to the man, but I don't like the woman to act like man. She is not soft. She is too tough. She rides motorcycles and she wear leather jackets and always she wear trousers. (Respondent #6)
>
> Samāh 'Anwār has something masculine about her. I don't know what. She wears trousers and rides motorcycles and never wears dresses or skirts. She is always somewhat masculine. She is very courageous to go on like this. She is probably the only woman who does this. I like it because it is different and she has the courage to do this and not make herself more feminine. This is her style and her type and I admire her courage. (Respondent #26 for photo #13)

The preceding comments are typical of those made by respondents about the personality projected by women depicted in billboard ads, and reflect a variety of views about what is acceptable for women, particularly if the woman is "mannish".

III. Sexuality

In addition to personality traits deemed appropriate for Egyptian women, the respondents believed that any reference to sexuality was completely taboo, particularly for women. Thus, it was not considered appropriate for women to show any interest in sexuality, discuss any aspect of sexuality, and certainly not appropriate to express affection in public, and even worse to appear sexually provocative. Respondents all agreed that these beliefs about sexuality constitute a strong social norm in Egypt today, though they acknowledged that it is increasingly being violated by mass media, particularly advertising.

A. Menstruation

This violation of social taboos around sexuality by the mass media in Egypt is particularly true for menstruation, since many Western products are now marketed in Egypt. Many of the television ads, for instance, are almost identical to the ones which appear in Canada and the U.S.A.: blue liquid being poured into pads to demonstrate their absorbency. All of the respondents believed that these t.v. ads go too far, even for Egyptians who don't mind these products being advertised. Some respondents complained that these ads have had negative consequences for women because now men are teasing women about menstruation. The following comments, triggered by the billboard ad for locally-produced sanitary napkins (photo #6), illustrate these beliefs about the inappropriateness of advertising these products on television and about the backlash this has created, particularly men making jokes about it:

> "Loulou" should not be shown in the streets...Men will make fun of such an ad and make fun of women, asking them if they have a "Loulou" today. They will call her names. They may call her "Loulou" even. Now men are calling women "Loulou". If a woman has a headache or does not feel good, men will ask her if she has a "Loulou". It became a big joke. There are many ads for "Loulou" and other companies on t.v. These ads are becoming more damaging than the street ads. This gives a bad message to boys. The boys are backward here and they make women feel uncomfortable about this thing. On t.v. they have many women doing these ads. People sometimes are amazed how a father or a woman's husband would allow these women to do such ads. There's a joke that the father of the woman who does this ad should get the extra "Loulou" which is in every package. It's a way of putting down such men. It implies that he is really a woman. He's doing it for this free sanitary napkin! (Respondent #27)

> They make jokes about it and this is not right. It shouldn't even be talked about. A woman uses it and she should not talk about it. That's all... Everybody knows "Loulou" now because of these ads and there are lots of jokes in the streets about "Loulou". That is not right. (Respondent #8)

> Can you imagine, one of my husband's relatives did the ad on t.v. with the blue water poured into the pads? All of us dislike this. (Respondent #5)

Regarding the billboard ad for "Loulou", not all respondents were willing to discuss this ad, primarily because they would not break the taboo on discussing menstruation. In some cases, I had to quickly hide the photograph of this ad and switch the respondent's attention to other ads in order to continue the interview. Even so, some respondents reacted so negatively and emotionally that the interview could not be continued at that particular time. On the other hand, a few respondents thought that the taboo on this subject was old-fashioned and should be abandoned. They believed that menstruation was a natural process which everyone should know about and be prepared for. While some respondents said that they would feel comfortable discussing menstruation and sanitary products with other women, most respondents said that they would not do so with men or children. Still, a few respondents said that menstruation is a natural process and everyone should know about it, that it should be discussed with children and perhaps with men. Whether willing or hesitant to discuss menstruation, virtually all respondents linked their remarks about this subject to advertisements.

Is advertising appropriate? If so, what kind of ads and in which media? Most respondents believed that advertisements in women's magazines and small posters in pharmacies were the most acceptable media. Even amongst the most tolerant group of respondents, not all agreed that ads for sanitary products should appear in the streets. The following remarks indicate respondents' beliefs about the appropriateness of discussing menstruation and sanitary products, and hence, their willingness to violate the social taboo on this topic, intertwined with their beliefs about the advertisement of women's sanitary napkins. First are the most negative reactions, illustrative of those who do not think menstruation should be discussed or advertised, regardless of medium:

> *YāSalām*! I have never seen this ad before and I think this would be very wrong to have this in the streets. This is something private, not advertised. (Respondent #31)
>
> I don't think this should be in the streets. It's not nice. '*Ayb*. It should be forbidden. (Respondent #45)
>
> I don't want to talk about this one at all! It's awful. It's personal. It shouldn't be in the streets. It's disgusting. Don't ask me any questions about it. (Respondent #38)
>
> This is *taḫt zift* (below shit/garbage). This must not be on the streets or in t.v., or in magazines. This is private and not to be seen in public. I hate it. She has no face. That's better for her to hide her face. She should be ashamed to be in this ad. Everybody knows what this is and its use. It should not be advertised. (Respondent #46)
>
> It's too personal a topic. I would not go to the pharmacy to buy these products even if I could afford them because I would be too shy. They should not put these ads in the streets. It's not appropriate for such a personal subject. (Respondent #29)
>
> I don't think they should have these kinds of ads in the streets because of our religion, too. It is *harām* [forbidden] to show like this. (Respondent #6)

The second set of comments are typical of respondents who believed that it is acceptable to advertise sanitary napkins in women's magazines and/or newspapers and/or posters in pharmacies, but not on billboards or any other media in the streets and not on television:

> I don't think these products should be advertised in the streets. They should be more discrete and only have small ads in newspapers and magazines, but not in the streets, and especially not big ones like this...I don't like this picture because it is something private and should not be up in public. (Respondent #28)
>
> It's embarrassing. This is a very big ad. I don't like it. Even on t.v., it is embarrassing and women don't like it. We might leave the room. Maybe they should just put this in magazines and pharmacies. (Respondent #33)
>
> I do not like this. It's not proper to show the towels like this because, you know, the Egyptian people, we are not so used to show those feminine things like this. It's not proper. The picture of the woman, it's nothing, *yānī*. The picture is ok, but the talking about the healthy towels, the subject, it's not proper; and like, here, my son just asked me, "What is this?" What can I say to him? I have to say it's natural business, you know. So we don't have to show it to everybody. Maybe [it can be advertised] in the feminine magazines, but not in the streets. The picture is ok because it doesn't show anything. It doesn't say anything. It doesn't have a relation with the subject or anything. It doesn't tell us anything about the

> product, you know. So the picture is ok, but I don't approve to advertise like this on the street or on the television, either...My son has already asked me about this, "What is this?" when he sees this on television. What can I say to him? Children shouldn't see this. (Respondent #12)

A few respondents believed that it is or should be acceptable to advertise sanitary napkins on billboards, but not on television, so long as the product itself is not shown:

> I like this ad. It is good because only the women and married men will know what it is for. This is something natural for us. It is a regular thing and part of our lives. Children will not know what "Loulou" is. They will not ask their parents about this ad because there is nothing interesting in it for them. The product is not apparent. The woman is nice-looking. We can't see her features. I think that is ok. On t.v., they show women being interviewed about these products -- different brands like "Always". These are real women being interviewed on t.v. So, this ad is good. I don't think they should show the product itself, and I hate the t.v. ads which do this. I especially hate the ones where they pour blue liquid into the product. (Respondent #47)

> It's ok in the streets because it is discreet. I'm not comfortable when these ads come on t.v., especially when men are around. They must make ads, but they should be short and no details, so that just women will understand. This one, they wrote only "Loulou", not sanitary towels, so it's a bit discreet, so it's ok. They don't show the product or talk about it. (Respondent #16)

A few other respondents believed that menstruation should not be a taboo subject, and that sanitary napkins could be advertised like any other product:

> Some women don't prefer to see these ads in the streets because children and men see it, but in this ad, it doesn't affect people here because they don't express what it is in this ad. Men and children don't know what it is about, but women know. We see this ad on television, a girl flying...If they didn't advertise in the streets, I wouldn't know about "Loulou". They have to advertise. It's a perfectly natural topic and everyone should know about it. It should not be a taboo topic. (Respondent #24)

> Yes, of course it's ok. There is no problem with advertising. I would also like to see it advertised in the pharmacy. I prefer that because any advertisement must be for people to see it. Where the people can see it? Someone haven't a t.v. Someone cannot read for any news magazines. The street, all of the people go there. So it must be in the street. (Respondent #15)

> This is really good. We just go into this business recently. It's a local manufacturing. This is the only way to express the effect of it. This is good. Oh, yes [this is ok in the streets]. Sure, because these things are brand new to us and everybody has to know what's new for hygienic measurements that we are not familiar with. (Respondent #10)

As already mentioned, not all respondents were willing to discuss this billboard ad for "Loulou", primarily because they would not break the taboo on discussing menstruation. Those who did discuss the ad, however, made a number of very important points which demonstrates how Egyptian women conceptualize menstruation and sexuality in general as well as the social taboo surrounding this subject. First, it was clear that respondents were generally happy that the woman depicted in the ad did not show her face and that she was a "generic" woman, not an identifiable person. Related to this are their comments about the woman's body being shapeless, looking more like a cloud than a person. This is because respondents believed that any woman posing for this ad would be embarrassed to be identified because she would be ashamed to appear in an ad for sanitary napkins. Respondents also said that they would feel embarrassed for the woman in the ad as well as embarrassed themselves to see such an ad. Again, these reactions and feelings reinforce the social taboo against any mention of menstruation, particularly in public. Respondents also made a number of comments about the billboard ad for "Loulou" which related to the symbolism used. In particular, they commented on the shape and size of the woman, her clothing and its color, what she appeared to be doing and feeling, and the color scheme and setting. Even though many respondents believed that the woman looked "silly" in the ad, most agreed that she appeared to be floating, flying like a bird, happy, free, comfortable, clean, and that these associations were deliberately intended by the creators of the ad in order to sell the product.

The following comments indicate some respondents' anger and/or embarrassment about the ad (photo #6) for sanitary napkins, particularly their preference not to see a woman's face:

> Silly. Maybe it is good for [not to see her face]. We don't see her face. This is shame for any woman. We don't see her body shape or her face. This is good. (Respondent #2)
>
> She must be very embarrassed. It's good you can't see who she is, *yānī*, it is a shame for her...At first I thought she was a cloud, not a woman! (Respondent #4)
>
> Where is the woman? Is this a woman? No, because this is not good for any girl. You can't have an advertisement like this. Maybe have a boy in the ad! [She laughed] This means she cannot go and come and jump. I don't like her. I can't see if this is woman or not woman. I can't see her [face]. No, this belong to something make any woman ashamed, you know. No woman can show her face here. I don't like it. It is there all the time for people to watch. It's not nice. (Respondent #15)

The following comments indicate some respondents' preference about portraying the woman's face and body as well as their interpretation of the link between the product and the image of the woman in the ad (photo #6):

> I think it is better not to see her face! I would feel sorry for a woman who shows her face in this ad in the streets. It would be an embarrassment for her. I think they drew it like this to show she is floating, care-free. The white is to show that she is clean. Maybe it shows she can do whatever she likes. We all know that women cannot fly, but this shows how easily she moves during her period if she wears this product! (Respondent #25)
>
> The woman is nice-looking. We can't see her features. I think that is ok...I think the green and white is a good combination. It is relaxing an restful. It shows the woman is comfortable

> and clean and relaxed. She looks like she is flying along in a beautiful garden. I like it. I think it is even nice to look at in the street, better than cement or bricks! (Respondent #47)

> Floating on air for sanitary napkins. I think the people who have the most problems with this are school girls when they first start menstruating. This looks like a fairy floating in the air. It would be interesting to see if this ad sells "Loulou". They should have a group of teen-aged girls here on the poster. (Respondent #22)

> I thought this was a piece of cloth, not a woman. It's supposed to make us think of purity and virginity. The white is symbolic of this. Egyptians don't use these things, anyway. I would rather see her face. I don't like it that she looks like a ghost. It's too white. You can hardly see where her face and her arm are. You really have to look to see it is supposed to be a woman. Only really conservative women would not want to see her face and may be embarrassed. I could do that ad. I wouldn't be embarrassed. Why would I be? I think it's fine to have ads for this product in the street, no problem. (Respondent #17)

> I think they are trying to make this woman look like an angel or something like that to show that she is very relaxed and free. The photo itself is not bad. The problem is to advertise the product itself. It's just a symbol, not a real woman. It doesn't matter to me if they have a symbol or a real woman. It's embarrassing for the woman herself who is in the advertisement. So not many women like to be a model for such a product. I would not like to see a woman's face, either. I would not respect this woman to be in the advertisement. There are some women on t.v. for this product, and we have a very bad opinion about them for this. They should not make these kinds of ads. (Respondent #23)

> It would be better if there was a real face on this woman. She should look comfortable and serene. This would convince women that this product would make real women feel comfortable and relaxed. I would prefer a woman in more conventional clothes. The white color shows that it is clean and would keep the woman clean. To me, this looks like a Kleenex being pulled out of a Kleenex box. I don't really like it. (Does it look like a woman flying or floating?) No, I don't agree. I don't like it, either. She should wear normal clothes and do normal things. (Respondent #27)

A few respondents explained that, according to religion, women are considered inferior to men because of menstruation. Most respondents accepted this idea, as illustrated in the following comment:

> The woman here is very white, white. It's probably a sign of purity, *kaydah* [that's it], and feeling free and her dress is sort of, *kaydah*, swinging in the wind, and she walks around really care-free minded. That's what it looks like. She is almost flying, *kaydah*. She is relaxed; I think, walking. This is what they want to tell us that by using this kind of sanitary towel, you can even wear white and stay clean. Definitely, white stands for clean. You can do anything, even fly. Here, you cannot do many things when you have your period: you cannot pray; you cannot fast; you lack mind; and women are seen to have less religion because they can't practice it fully while they are menstruating. So men have the advantage of being more religious. Women cannot practice religion regularly like men. This is the explanation for why women cannot be as religious as men. Women are not allowed into the mosque when they have their period. They are considered unclean and will contaminate the mosque. There are many things women cannot do while having their period. It is all given in the *Qur'ān*. [Here, we do not see her face] [t]o give the whole thing a bit of anonymity.

> It is enough that they set up an ad like this. They don't have to indicate specific features of this woman. This is meant to represent all women. It is meant to make it less embarrassing than it already is. Her figure is also something imaginary. It is symbolic and anonymous. (Respondent #26)

A few of the respondents expressed very critical views akin to Western feminist ones, as exemplified by this one:

> I believe this is also not acceptable because it does not portray women nor menstruation as something natural. These images are not realistic or natural; they portray a faceless, formless female who is probably a virgin, not a person. The picture is vague, ambivalent, not clear, almost like a mirage, perhaps appealing to the fantasy of men about conquering virgins. I don't like it at all. (Respondent #3)

This billboard ad (photo #6) for sanitary products was for a local Egyptian company. The product, "Loulou", is well-known to the lower-middle and middle classes, though the vast majority of Egyptian women cannot afford it and use more traditional methods for dealing with menstruation. Upper-middle and upper class women prefer Western products, particularly "Always", since the Egyptian-made products tend to fall apart, leak, and remain stuck to clothing. Even though menstruation remains a taboo subject in Egyptian society, many of the respondents who had used "Loulou" wanted to explain to me how it was inferior to imported, Western products. The following comments reflect the class distinctions in the use of sanitary products:

> I saw the ads for "Loulou" on t.v. I would never use these products because they are too expensive. I am only interested in the things which I can afford to buy. Products I will never use, I don't bother with...I don't know how my kids understand this, but they try to explain this...I don't understand it [this ad] at all...I would not go to the pharmacy to buy these products even if I could afford them because I would be too shy. (Respondent #29)

> This one is Egyptian company...I think educated women prefer to buy foreign brands. The Egyptian one is not such good quality. But every Egyptian woman knows "Loulou". (Respondent #32)

> I use "Loulou". It's good. Sometimes I prefer "Dahlia" and "Always". I used "Loulou" in secondary school, but now I use "Dahlia" in the house and "Always" in the outside. (Respondent #48)

> I don't like it. I don't use it very frequently. I think it's not a very good mark. You know, it's also from Carmen [company]...I like "Always" more, you know?...I think it's foreign. It is more comfortable, I think. Sometimes [with "Loulou"] the cotton comes out from the paper and also there is no good distribution for the liquid throughout, while in "Always", I think it distributes the liquid so you don't feel wet. You feel dry and comfortable, and it is not very thick. "Loulou" is very thick and I don't feel comfortable in it. "Always" is very thin, but although it is very thin, it distributes the liquid evenly and doesn't fall apart. It's not annoying like "Loulou". "Always with Wings" is not found in Egypt, but I saw it in Sa'udi Arabia. I don't know why it isn't here. Maybe it is too expensive for the people. Also, "Loulou" is bad in another thing...The adhesion. It gets adhered to the underwear that you can't remove it. It's very difficult to remove. I made a very great effort to remove it from the

> underwear that it may get torn and broken while I am removing it and the adhesive tape is still on it! So I hate it and I don't use it. Sometimes Mother buys many cases of "Loulou" because it is cheap. I should finish them before I buy "Always", but I hate to do so. If there are no napkins here, if we have a choice, we buy "Always" directly. (Respondent #11)

Clearly, there is a wide array of views amongst respondents about the acceptability of discussing menstruation, about whether sanitary products should be advertised, and about how they should be advertised. While the social taboo against discussing this aspect of sexuality is still strong, it is obvious from the interview data that some Egyptian women believe that it is time to reject this taboo. Those who do violate this norm, however, are still the minority.

B. Projecting Sexuality

Another aspect of beliefs about sexuality which emerged from the interviews is that Egyptian women are not expected to demonstrate any interest in sex nor to express affection in public, nor to be sexually provocative in public. Any pose or movement associated with sex is considered immoral for women. Even holding hands and showing any kind of affection in public, while becoming more common, was not considered acceptable by most of the women interviewed. Kissing, in particular, is not acceptable in public. Most of the respondents believed that kissing in front of anyone, even inside the household, is not acceptable. In fact, any show of affection or emotion whatsoever is socially taboo in Egypt. In addition, girls and women are expected to refrain from expressing any emotion, whether positive or negative. Shyness is expected. Any violation of these norms results in a woman being considered immoral and "evil". The following comments about the couple depicted kissing in a billboard ad (photo #23) for the movie "*Lay, Yā Haram*?" ("Why, Oh Pyramid?") are characteristic of the respondents' beliefs about this public display of affection:

> The kissing couple is not suitable for children...It is forbidden. It has a bad effect on children. It encourages boys and girls to be together. (Respondent #9)

> It's not very nice to show kissing in the streets. This is still a religious country and it makes religious people offended. So why make religious people offended, especially now when we are so worried about terrorists? We mustn't offend religious people. Some of them may become very aggressive and want to tear these ads apart. (Respondent #16)

> I don't like the intimacy in public. Here in our culture, public expression of intimate feelings is not acceptable. Husband and wife cannot kiss each other in public because it would be provocative to others and upset feelings of others who are not having a wife or a husband. So such [kissing] should be behind closed doors relationships between husbands and wives. Even a friendly kiss, I don't even talk about passionate kissing in public, but even a friendly kiss between husband and wife would be totally unacceptable in Egypt if it happened in public. It must be only in private...I am not expressing my personal views only, but the effect of these pictures on the public. For me, if I see this or anything else, it doesn't have to affect me. Age-wise and status-wise, it does not affect me. But asked what is my opinion as an Egyptian citizen, I would advise that this is provocative and not acceptable to show it like this. That's why you won't find men and women kissing, not even passionate, but even

> friendly kissing, is not even acceptable in a social context in public. This is not an Egyptian habit or an Egyptian accepted behavior. The bottom line is that expression of affection beyond shaking hands in public is not acceptable in the Egyptian context, let alone something that is more than that. Do you recall when Clark and Crystal from "The Bold and The Beautiful" were here on a visit and it was the Cairo Cinema Festival? Clark spontaneously wanted to greet the broadcaster as she was announcing him. He shook hands with her and kissed her spontaneously. It was just a friendly kiss, something that would be very spontaneous and nothing in America. He wanted to show how happy he was to be in Egypt and to be greeting the announcer. This was live on t.v. This was the talk of the town! It was the catastrophe of her life because she was kissed on t.v., in public, and the *shaykhs* of al-'Azhar and the religious people were talking about this. Everyone in Cairo was upset. As a result, he apologized publicly after that, that this was not his intent to offend anyone. This was a very hot issue. It was the talk of the town That's why it is so important to consider the community, the society in which we are living. What is shown must be appropriate in this context. (Respondent #19)

Pre-marital sex is prohibited for Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Egypt. Dating is also not acceptable. Couples must be engaged before they are allowed to socialize together, even with a chaperone. Women are not expected to show any interest in sex before marriage, and are considered responsible for instigating any interest a man may show in them. This affects many of the social norms and taboos for women, particularly young women. The onus is on the woman to cover her body, appear asexual, and ignore men in order to remain "good". When a woman is first married, she is expected to be a virgin. Once married, extra-marital sex is also forbidden for both sexes, though, it is more tolerated for men. Most of the respondents believed that these norms are necessary and acceptable to prevent women from becoming immoral. They all accepted that the basis for this ideal of the asexual woman lies in religion; there was consensus on this point amongst Christian and Muslim respondents alike. Nevertheless, most of the advertising for films and stage plays projected images of forbidden sex, whether pre-marital or extra-marital. The following comments about an ad (photo #27) for a very controversial film, "'*Indhār bi-Ṭā'ah*" ("Notification of Order of Obedience"), about a woman who lives with a man outside of wedlock are characteristic of respondents' beliefs on this subject:

> He is not her husband and he want her to do everything for him like she is his wife...[H]e go to the court and try to get this order [*ta'a*]. How can he do that? He hasn't any special paper to do that. He is not her husband. That make the people think about something crazy, not really [reality]. That's not the rule for Muslims. That's not good for Muslims...He wanted to marry her but only at the end of the film. Her family want her to marry the rich man and don't think about the love. Love is no good. Many people of Egypt think the love began after that marry, not before, you know? A lot of people think that. I speak about all people in Egypt. At first marry, and later love. I think that's wrong, but I think what this movie do is also wrong. They must be friends first and then marry, but not lovers before they marry. But I must know who I marry, how he think, how he spend his time, how he work, you see?...So she must love the man before marriage, but not live with him. (Respondent #15)

> Laila 'Alwī is always in movies where she looks very cheap. Guys used to talk about her in school as being such a slut. She is a major topic of their conversation about women...both in high school and at the American University. They like to see her dancing and her

> bedroom scenes, and then they say that she is a slut. I don't think women in her position in reality who are working as dancers are really that way...and yet sex in an Islamic country is not supposed to exist in movies and youth aren't supposed to do it; yet, they all go to these movies and they see this woman who is an Arab and is supposed to be a Muslim, and she breaks all the taboos. So they are curious and they want to see what is forbidden. It's an attraction towards something that is forbidden. It's a bit hypocritical. They call her a slut because she's doing something she isn't supposed to do, but they go to see her because they want to know what is hidden from them. In Egypt, this is supposed to be taboo. It's not free like Canada. There's no neighbor to tell on you there; but here, everyone is scared of the religion and of what everyone will say. Everything is so tight. If someone has pre-marital sex, they keep it undercover and it would not be known to anyone other than the couple because people would be very upset; and because of the female being portrayed like these women in the movies, they think they are cheap because they are breaking the rules. But for a playboy, it's not a problem. But the woman is looked down upon by men and women and by society as a whole and it brings shame to her family. It's '*ār* [shame]. (Respondent #17)

As discussed in Chapter Five, there was also consensus amongst the respondents that the lower neck, shoulders, upper arms, any part of the torso, and legs above the knee should not be exposed by women because those body parts are considered sexually provocative. The *muḥaggabāt* believed that only the face should be exposed, that all other body parts, and indeed even the general shape of the body, are sexually provocative and must be covered. Thus, the *muḥaggabāt* believed that women should wear very loose dresses that do not reveal body contours. The question of what body parts must be covered has been addressed more fully in Chapter Five. Here, it is important to note the point that there is consensus amongst Egyptian women that revealing particular body parts constitutes sexual provocativeness on the part of the woman, and hence, gives her low status, and probably that of the "evil" woman. The following comments capture some of these sentiments:

> Also, here, you see, she [Nadia al-Gindī] is without clothes! She must be covered. These are Egyptian actors, Egyptian film; they must show other pictures from the film, but not bad one as this. This woman is not respected. She is bad woman, prostitute, nobody like woman like this. You see, I cannot go out like this. No woman go out without all her clothes like this! No Egyptian woman go out without all her clothes like this!...I am not interested to see such bad things...She is not good to be such a woman. I don't want to see this. (Respondent #14 for photo #30)

> I can't look at this. It is so bad, so bad, so bad. Please don't show me such pictures. This is really bad. This is forbidden in Islam, completely forbidden! (Respondent #50 for photo #30)

Similarly, in terms of body pose and attitude projected, women are supposed to be asexual. If a woman is considered sexually provocative, she would be considered a prostitute. This is the worst status and role possible for Egyptian women. Actors, singers, and belly dancers are widely believed to be sexually provocative in their behavior on stage, as well as being prostitutes in private life, though this will be discussed in greater detail below. There was consensus about these ideas amongst the respondents. Therefore, virtually all of the respondents, even those younger ones who believed that dating should be more informal, were extremely upset with the sexually provocative nature of many of the images of women depicted on billboard ads, as reflected in the following comments:

> This one...is basically a depiction of whores. All women are whores in the entertainment industry -- at least that is how they are depicted. (Respondent #3 for photo #27)

> There is something offensive about her here. She's [Fīfī 'Abdū] supposed to be Egyptian, but she is wearing stuff no Egyptian female would wear. She's got a bitchy attitude and expression. She doesn't look nice at all...No Egyptian woman would wear this dress even to a nightclub or a dance. They might wear something similar but it would always be covered with a long jacket and so you would never see the top part, especially the shoulders and arms. (Respondent #17 for photo #34)

> I think it's provocative, you know? There's some kind of sex appeal here, obviously. Did you see anybody eat it [spaghetti] like that, *yānī*? This is just to attract men to look. They think it is sexy if the woman's mouth is open. For conservative people, religious people, *yānī*, this is indecent. (Respondent #17 for photo #1)

> This one offers the body of the woman like a big flesh, nothing emotional, nothing good in spiritual case, no respect for her as a woman in a good way...If the story talks about bad women or prostitution also in the advertising, they should not offer it like this...It's wrong to show woman's body parts like this and to focus on the woman's breasts. If they show the body, show the whole body, not cut in half like this...It's immoral. I don't like for a respectable woman to be like that in a photo...But in the photo it drives men to have sins in mind even if they are good men. Maybe it will affect their moral behavior. They will have a bad, an animal desire towards their girlfriends. Woman is not a body; woman is more respectable than a body; woman is a soul, something great. (Respondent #2 for photo #27)

> I don't like the pose. She [Laila 'Alwī] shouldn't do such a thing like this, the way she is doing her fingers. She doesn't care -- so what? "Do you think I care about you?" She is defying her husband. She doesn't care about the order. It's a kind of rudeness. It's not nice. Maybe she is trying to be strong and rude and you know talking in an ugly way and so on. (Respondent #8 for photo #27)

> This one I'd label as obscene. By the way, you know, this gesture, this finger gesture has, other than the face value, a meaning or interpretation. This particular finger, when it is bent like this, has very obscene connotations. They wanted to show it, yet at the same time conceal it. If this is done in any place, it is the most obscene gesture, so they had a woman do this with this sexy appearance. It would be an open invitation for sex. If I was talking to a man, I wouldn't have said that because this is going beyond the limits of what a woman would say, even at our level. I would be too timid or shy to voice it if a man was present. This is very obscene and not appropriate at all. It should not be in the streets like this. (Respondent #19 for photo #27)

IV. Tobacco, Alcohol, and Other Drugs

Women in Egypt are not supposed to **smoke** cigarettes or *shīshah* (waterpipe). Neither are women supposed to **drink** alcohol or take hallucinogenic **drugs**. All of the women interviewed believed that drinking alcohol and taking drugs is immoral and forbidden by Islam for both men and women. Most of the respondents also believed that smoking cigarettes is unfeminine and wrong and that smoking tobacco or *hashīsh* in a *shīshah* (waterpipe) is shameful for women.

Despite most respondents belief that smoking cigarettes is not only unfeminine but morally wrong, some of them did smoke cigarettes, though none smoked *shīshah* (waterpipe). One billboard ad (photo #31) for the movie, "*Khamsah Bāb*" ("Five Doors"), depicted the star, Nadia al-Gindī, with a cigarette in her hand, in a very provocative pose wearing the most indecent dress of all those depicted on billboards, triggering the following comments from respondents:

> It's wrong. It's distracting. No one should do this sort of thing. The dress is obscene and she should be covered. Her pose is bad, even if she had a good dress on. She shouldn't stand like this. It's obscene. I also dislike the cigarette. Women should not smoke. (Respondent #31)
>
> This is [a] very bad one. I think she is indecent here. She does these things for money. This is not acceptable in our religion. I don't look at her. All of this is nonsense. Everything [is terrible]. See her attitude. It is very bad, very bad attitude. She is smoking and looks like a prostitute. She is naked. This is too much. We cannot accept this. Yes [I know she plays the part of a prostitute]. I told you she is not decent. Why to make such a thing? Do we have to see prostitution for entertainment now? This is not correct. (Respondent #44)
>
> It is too vulgar. Nadia al-Gindī, she is vulgar and immoral. All her movies are very bad. She play immoral woman always. See her standing here? It is very vulgar and obscene, really. She is just a big flesh. She is naked and use her body to catch men. She is smoking, also. This is not acceptable for a woman. No, I don't want to look at this one. (Respondent #2)
>
> Look at the dress she is wearing! I didn't even realize that it has a sort of hole here -- heart-shaped. It looks very vulgar. She looks like a prostitute. Maybe it is the image we have of a prostitute...The way her mouth is open, like she is giving some sort of -- what would you say? It has something very sexual, I think. And, uh, look at her dress; it's very wide here on the leg, showing the leg. Look how she is holding the cigarette. It's very vulgar, *mish 'arfah* (I don't know). (Respondent #26)

Smoking [tobacco or *hashīsh* in a] *shīshah* (waterpipe) is a very old tradition throughout the Middle East. Though some women acknowledged that one can see seemingly educated, rich Egyptian women smoking *shīshah* at the same table with men in Cairo's five star hotel cafes, they all believed that this practice was wrong and that it was more characteristic of uneducated, low class men.[1] The following comments are typical of those made by the respondents regarding smoking *shīshah*, particularly by women, in response to the two billboard ads (photos #32 & #35) which depicted a woman holding a *shīshah*:

> She just smokes it because she is *mu'allimah*. I don't know why they do it. Maybe they like it. Egyptians do not approve of women smoking *shīshah*. In fact, our society does not like men smoking *shīshah*, either. In the five star hotels like Sheraton and Hilton, there are places for *shīshah* smoking. You can see very rich men and very *chic* women smoking *shīshah*. I don't like it at all. It's very bad. It's very bad for health and very bad for women. Women shouldn't do this in Egypt. Fīfī 'Abdū is supposed to be a *baladī* woman here. Some of them smoke *shīshah*. Only *baladī* people smoke *shīshah*, and not even all *baladī* people smoke

> *sh̲īsh̲ah.* (Respondent #34 for photo #32)
>
> Most Egyptians would be offended by a woman holding or using a *sh̲īsh̲ah.* They will think she is a hooker and low class. (Respondent #17 for photo #32)
>
> I don't like *sh̲īsh̲ah* or cigarettes, even the smell of it, even for men. My husband used to smoke *sh̲īsh̲ah* sometimes, but in the cafe, never at home. I don't like it at all and never in the house. My son smokes *sh̲īsh̲ah* in the house and I hate it. I keep telling him not to do so. Finally, I broke his *sh̲īsh̲ah* pipes before the *'Īd* (Feast) and told him never to bring one here again. (Respondent #41 for photo #32)

Hallucinogenic drugs, primarily smoking *hash̲īsh̲* but also inhaling cocaine, are becoming common in Egypt now, available to all classes of people. While smoking *hash̲īsh̲* is a custom which has been widely practiced by all classes in Egypt for centuries, particularly amongst *Sh̲ī'ah* and *Sūfī* Muslims, it is not currently sanctioned by the state. In fact, the state has suppressed and outlawed many such practices associated with Islam which the ruling elites believe to be incompatible with modernity and a more secular conceptualization of the state. These traditional customs have long been referred to as "magical" and inappropriate for Islam (Van Vleck, 1990). None of the women interviewed gave mention to this custom of smoking *hash̲īsh̲* as part of religious ritual, but concurred in their dislike of *hash̲īsh̲* as well as all other illegal drugs.

Some respondents believed that taking drugs is a Western custom which is corrupting Egyptians and many blamed the *mu'allimāt* (*baladī* businesswomen) for being behind the drug trade in Egypt. Respondents' comments about the *mu'allimāt* fell into two opposite views, entirely negative or very positive, with few in between. This reflects the difference in class amongst respondents, which itself reflects the difference in actual experience with the *mu'allimāt*. In general, those respondents who had a very negative view of the *mu'allimāt* had higher education, spent most, if not all, of their lives in Cairo, and were from middle class, upper-middle class, or upper class families. This is reflected in the following comments:

> Sh̲arīfa Fadl is *mu'allimah.* She controls the nightclub. She buys the alcohol, attracts foreigners to her nightclub. She is in control. She is the owner. She is the boss. She doesn't delegate authority to her employees. She controls everything herself. She is very strong. (Respondent #28 for photo #28)
>
> Here, she [Fifī 'Abdū] looks like *mu'allimah. Mu'alimāt* have both positive and negative aspects. She really knows her trade and nothing escapes her attention. She knows everything in the neighborhood and in her business. This is good. In my upbringing, *mu'allimah* is a very negative thing. I was always told that *mu'allimah* is a very negative thing. It has very negative connotations to be called *mu'allimah.* They are the big fat women selling meat or vegetables in large containers with very low status. They are the market women, *baladī* women. In our minds, we think that no man can ever satisfy such a woman because she is so fat. Men are like toys to them. This means that we think they probably have sex with many men and are always looking for men for sex. They are promiscuous. Often, they don't get married. They may stay with a man for a few weeks, get tired of him, and then throw him

> out. They are in control of their lives, even their sex partners. (Respondent #28 for photo #32)

> Here, she is carrying the *shīshah* and is a *mu'allimah.* There are two types of *mu'allimāt.* One is the widowed woman who has no real choice but to take over her husband's business and has to run it in order to survive. The other is the one who opens businesses on her own, especially bad ones like a whore house. This type is very bad. (Respondent #29 for photo #32)

Those respondents who had a more realistic understanding of the *mu'allimāt* tended to be migrants from the countryside and had little, if any education, or were landowners who travelled regularly to their farms and had a good understanding of life in rural communities. Comments by these respondents about the *mu'allimāt* reflect a greater, more realistic understanding of this role:

> There are good ones and bad ones. It depends on the person itself. Bad ones make money for protection and force people to do things for them. The good ones get the rights for the poor people. It's like the cowboy films in a way. Some are good and some are bad. (Respondent #48 for photo #32)

> *Mu'allimāt* are very strong women, *bint baladī.* They take care of their community. They are the peace-makers in disputes within the community, breaking up fights and making people behave themselves. They are very good women. They are very honest and strong. They have a lot of courage and are afraid of no one. Men are often afraid of them. Usually their husbands or fathers are *mu'allim* and they grew up with some familiarity with this role. They have a high status in their own community. Of course, there are some which are dishonest and may engage in illegal activities, including drugs and prostitution these days. I think they are the minority. The bad ones would not be so respected as the honest ones. (Respondent #52 for photo #32)

> Here, I think she is *mu'allimah.* In Egyptian movies, the *mu'allimah* is always portrayed as dealing in drugs or brothels. In actual life, the *mu'allimah* can be like this or very different. Some of them are good and they have a good voice and good control in the community. I think here when you look at this picture, Fīfī 'Abdū will smoke *shīshah* and run a brothel...It is about a *baladī mu'allimah* and her girls. The problem is that *baladī* women like this do not wear dresses like this. You know, I actually saw this movie. It is a true story and Fīfī 'Abdū did a very good job in her role. The story is not such a happy one, but it is a true one. (Respondent #49 for photo #32)

> There are two kinds [of *mu'allimāt*]. The good ones are *baladī* women who control their communities. They protect people in the local community. Everyone knows better than to bother them. They run small businesses and are honest. The bad *mu'allimāt* use their businesses to attract men and they often encourage men to smoke *shīshah* or *hashīsh* and they may even run brothels. They are loose women and have no morals. They are bad women. They may do many things which are illegal. When I was living in *Shāri'a* Muhammad 'Alī, I knew some *mu'allimāt.* They were respected and feared by everyone in the neighborhood. They were good women. They took good care of the dancers and everyone in the street and had a big influence on all the people there. This woman is probably *mu'allimah,* but I don't know why she has this dress on or where is got it from. No one wears such a dress. She is supposed to be a *baladī mu'allimah.* Maybe she owns a

> *shīshah* shop. If she is an honest woman and a good woman, it is ok. I, myself, do not like people smoking *shīshah*, so I don't think it is a good idea for a woman to run one; but if she is an honest businesswoman, that is ok. (Respondent #41 for photo #32)

A few respondents recognized that the role of *mu'allimah,* which is part of the traditional way of life in Egypt, has nearly disappeared. Due to increased urbanization and migration, the local, traditional extended family as well as the traditional community have been destabilized and nearly destroyed in urban and rural areas alike.

> *Mu'allimāt* is a dying breed because more girls are getting an education. Society is changing. (Respondent #27 for photo #35)

> *Mu'allimāt*. This is bad for the woman, I think. It is not the time to be *mu'allimāt*. This time is passed. Now, the time has changed. Even to be *mu'allim* now for the man is passed, so what about for the woman? (Respondent #48 for photo #32)

None of the respondents acknowledged the open buying and selling of drugs, even by adolescents, in Cairo's many exclusive, private country clubs. None of the respondents mentioned allegations that well-known politicians as well as high-ranking police and military officers were allegedly behind large-scale smuggling of drugs, particularly cocaine and *hashīsh*, into the country. (confidential interviews) Most of the women, however, believed that entertainment industry moguls and stars were involved in drug-trafficking and decried the negative influence of entertainment on society. Many respondents complained bitterly that entertainers are such negative role models, particularly for young people. Some respondents believed that Gulf Arab money ("petrodollars") was controlling the entertainment industry and may well be involved in the drug trade in Egypt as well. Respondents were particularly disturbed by the fact that in Egyptian movies and plays, the female stars were playing the role of prostitute in addition to being a singer and/or dancer, the most negative roles for women. (Sonbol, 1988)

Drinking alcohol is forbidden by Islam. Pious Coptic Christians also do not drink alcohol. Nevertheless, locally made mead (beer made from fermented honey), beer (made from fermented grain), '*iraq* (liquor from fermented dates), and other alcoholic beverages have been popular since Pharaonic days. Their popularity has always been regionally-based and class-based, but today one's interpretation of religion is a determining factor in alcohol consumption. Casinos and nightclubs have never been prohibited from selling alcohol to Egyptians, except during the holy month of *Ramadān* when only non-Muslims are allowed to buy alcohol.

Besides selling alcohol, owners of nightclubs and casinos are also believed to be involved in the drug trade. These establishments are also considered to be places of bad repute because of their alleged link to prostitution. Most respondents linked drug use, drinking alcohol, and prostitution. Most of the respondents objected to the growing use of alcohol and cigarettes, and many complained bitterly about the large number of casinos and nightclubs in Cairo. None of the respondents approved of drinking alcohol, though a few admitted to having imbibed at one time or another. They viewed the widespread availability of alcohol and the mushrooming of nightclubs and casinos as a direct result of significant Western and Arab Gulf influence in Egypt and indicative of increasing moral decay. Since one of the billboard ads (photo #28) was for a nightclub (*al-Layl*, "the night") owned by a famous, now elderly singer named Sharīfa Fadl, it triggered a barrage of angry comments from most respondents:

> I don't like this one because of the way she sings and she has a nightclub, and usually people who have nightclubs have a reputation which is not good. So this one is not respectable and not successful in her songs even though she makes a lot of money from her nightclub. Her songs are not classy songs. They are for low level people -- vulgar...[T]he name of her nightclub ["The Night"], you know, it has immoral meaning. (Respondent #2 for photo #28)

> I think anybody who wants to go to nightclubs knows about her club...I think it is mostly rich Arabs from the Gulf who go there and some of the workers who gained a lot of money from working in the Gulf. (Respondent #3 for photo #28)

> These kinds of nightclubs, it's not good for women to go to. It's not good for men, either. It's not good for any good or conservative people to go to there. I don't know anybody who goes to them. It's mostly bad people who like to go to there...I think it's very expensive to go there. It's mostly foreigners who like to be there. A lot of Arabs from Kuwait and Sa'udi Arabia go there and Westerners go there, too -- but not so many Egyptians. The nightclubs and hotels are nice and it's nice to be there, but the nightclubs at al-Haram are bad and for bad people -- especially bad women. I think it is mostly for prostitutes. (Respondent #23 for photo #38)

> ...[I]t [the play, "Love in the Remand Center"] was repulsive in showing the nightclub scenes, the way they show the prostitutes in the nightclub -- how they sit on the laps of men in the audience, and the clothes they are wearing. But people like it, especially people from Arab countries. They book the first few rows. They are the most expensive rows in the theatre. They may pay 70 pounds for each ticket. I saw many Arabs there. In all the plays, you see them sitting in the first two rows. They like this kind of stuff. This is why they come to Cairo. They like it here for the shopping, movies, plays, seashores, a lot of fun, more than [in] their countries, especially Sa'udi Arabia. (Respondent #25 for photo #14)

Despite the overwhelmingly negative response of most respondents to nightclubs in general, only two respondents had, in fact, been to this particular nightclub, "*al-Layl*" (The Night). They gave very different accounts based on their experience:

> ...I even went to the nightclub that she owns. I don't like her. She [Sharīfa Fadl] does not behave good. She is not a good woman. I think that she is a *sharmūṭah* [prostitute] and that she has many of them in her nightclub. She gives these girls to the Kuwaitis and Sa'udis. That's why she is bad. I hate her. She is very old, but she still sings in her nightclub...When I hear that she is very bad woman, I don't like her songs and I don't like to hear anything about her. It's important for me to know the character itself of the person...I don't think the talent is separate from one's personal life. The talent does not exist in bad people. Like this woman, I don't think that she has any talent, because she is a bad woman. She is ugly in her body and her character...Most people don't like her. She gives Egypt a bad name. (Respondent #48 for photo #28)

> Knowing the person made me like her. I went to *al-Layl* one night and I was really surprised. It was like a regular casino. There were families there with children. It's a satisfactory place. It's not what we think it is. It is not like the movies, corners with bad women sitting with men. I went there and found families there. When I found out about this, I can not be against her. She [Sharīfa Fadl] is running a respectable place. She is a normal person. She eats and cries and runs a respectable place. The fact that she runs a nightclub gives her a bad reputation and made the women against her. She's married to someone who is allegedly smuggling liquor, but who's not?...The fact that this is a nightclub gives it bad connotations. I saw worse things in hotels. We are all taught that nightclubs are not respectable, but this is not true. In fact, worse things happen in hotels, hotels which we all go to. I remember thinking when we went into this club and thinking we are doing something wrong. When we went in, we realized that there is nothing going on. (Respondent #21 for photo #28)

Clearly, respondents considered drug use to be inappropriate, particularly for women. Billboard ads associating women with drug use, even smoking cigarettes, enraged respondents. They believed that drug use is a sign of immoral character and is entirely unacceptable, though they also indicated that drug use is becoming a more widespread problem today. Respondents made it clear that women who use drugs are "evil". Most respondents blamed this increased drug use on Western and Arab influences in Egypt.

V. Violence

Violence was another theme depicted in billboard ads which enraged the respondents. Two billboard ads depict a woman holding a weapon (photos #17 & #22) and another (photo #23) depicts a man brandishing a sword. The one depicting a man holding a sword was the only one of the three ads which utilized some symbols of Egyptian content. This ad was for a movie called, "*Lay, Yā Haram?*" (Why, Oh Pyramid?"), starring the most famous male tough-guy hero, Farīd Shawqī, featured in *baladī* attire brandishing a sword and a menacing gaze. Because of the angle the sword is viewed at, its identity is somewhat ambiguous, so that some respondents initially believed it to be the inside of his robe. Although aggression and even militarism are an acceptable part of masculinity for Egyptians, this violent aspect of the ad did upset many of the respondents, as reflected in the following comments:

> I don't like Farīd Shawqī at all. He always plays the tough guy, using knives. He looks mean and aggressive and violent...Now, his movies have become much more violent, with a lot of blood flowing. This is not acceptable. They show drugs in his movies now, too. I don't like this at all. He is a bad role model for men. Some women like him, but I don't...I don't like this picture at all. I don't think it would be a good movie and it's definitely not a good ad. (Respondent #1)

> He usually has a knife like this and looks fierce. I don't like this picture because it encourages boys to carry knives and fight. He usually fights and plays the tough guy in movies and he is a very good actor. I don't like violent movies...(Respondent #31)

> Farīd Shawqī is very famous and a good actor and he attracts people to his movies. Even though he looks mean in his movies, he is the hero in his movies. Sometimes he doesn't even kill anyone. He is handsome. He has a strong personality and is very strong. He is sort of a

> male role model. He doesn't allow anyone to push him around. I like that, but I don't like it if there is killing or beating in the movie. (Respondent #27)

The ad (photo #22) depicting a man holding a huge machine gun and a woman holding what appears to be a rocket-shaped weapon of some sort was actually an ad for the U.S. movie, "Hot Shots, Part II." The attire of both the man and the woman was completely indecent by Egyptian standards because so much of their bodies was revealed. In addition, respondents also recognized that this must be a foreign, probably American, movie because the man is wearing a hair-band and has long hair, and because the woman is standing so close to him and is holding some sort of military weapon. Thus, all respondents were certain that this was not an Egyptian movie, and probably not an Arab movie because the identity projected was decidedly foreign. While some respondents were very supportive of Egypt's military alliance with the U.S., others were not. Most respondents vehemently objected to the militarism projected by this ad. Most respondents were particularly upset about the woman being depicted with weapons, since such aggressive behavior is totally unacceptable for women. These various views are reflected in the following comments:

> This looks like a foreign gun and with her belly hanging out like this and these big machine guns. I don't like guns at all. They encourage people to be more violent and to use guns. You see little boys playing with guns all the time. My grandson has many different types of toy guns and he knows the names of the models, the types of bullets they take, and everything -- how to clean them and use them. He talks about guns like a man and he is only four years old. I don't like this at all. He gets this from his father and his grandfather...He even has guns hanging up on the walls. I am always worried that my grandson will climb up and try to use it. I always warn my daughter that this is very dangerous. What can I do? Anyway, I hate violent movies and I never watch them. [Here], [t]hey look like foreigners. He looks like Rambo. Is this Sylvester Stallone?...For me, they should not put pictures like this in the streets. I don't like this woman's belly hanging out like this, either...Now we are having so much trouble with fanatic people. We shouldn't irritate them. This whole ad is too aggressive and in bad taste. (Respondent #1)

> *Ṭab'ān* (of course), first of all, they are using guns for a clear indication that this is an action movie...The people here are sort of addicted to action movies. The woman is used to attract men to the movie -- the way she is dressed. The ingredients of a successful film here are action and attractive women. This attracts the widest spectrum of audience possible. I think it is mostly men who go to them, though. I would not go to this movie...I hate these guns in the picture. I hate action movies. I hate violence. If they don't show the guns in the ads, they would not attract the audience for an action movie. But I don't like it. I don't approve of it, even to make more sales...She is probably playing the role of a fighter. I don't like it for men or for women. (Respondent #26)

> It must be a foreign film. They look like foreigners. I don't like his long hair. I don't like their clothes, especially the woman not being covered up. Our youth are imitating this kind of thing, boys wearing long hair and wanting guns. I don't like to see guns like this. It's not acceptable. If you have land, you will find men with guns to protect your property. They shoot bullets into the air to scare away intruders. It's necessary there, but not in Cairo. At weddings, they shoot bullets up in the air. When people return from pilgrimage, they fire guns to welcome them back. We don't use guns to kill people unless there is a fight, but this is due to the devil's influence. (Respondent #31)

One ad (photo #17) depicted a woman who was pointing a small hand gun at the viewer. It was for a movie called "*Ḍaḥk, Li'ab, Gad, wa Hub*" ("Laughter, Play, Seriousness, Love"), starring a famous trio of Egyptian actors: 'Umar Sharīf, 'Amr Diāb and Yusrā. Although filmed in Egypt with Egyptian actors, this was the most foreign of the three ads, portraying Yusrā in a slinky, tight, sleeveless, low-cut, black, Western evening dress, 'Umar Sharīf in a Western businessman's suit speaking on the telephone, and 'Amr Diāb in Western dress trousers and no shirt. Furthermore, all three actors look very angry: Yusrā is snarling, 'Umar Sharīf looks very angry, and 'Amr Diāb is delivering a Western-style punch to an invisible assailant. The following comments are characteristic of respondents' views about anger and violence, particularly by women:

> This is 'Amr Diāb; he is naked. See how aggressive he is, fighting like this? Yusrā is also naked. She is shooting her gun at someone. *Yānī*, this is unbelievable here in Egypt, a woman shooting at someone! I think she is a very popular actress, but this is too much. 'Umar Sharīf, also, he is very famous in Egypt. Here, he looks too angry, also. I think he makes some good movies in the West, but this one is Egyptian, and I think it must be stupid. The name does not make sense and looks stupid next to such angry pictures. (Respondent #2)

> Again, *yānī*, this is so bad...It is against our religion. Why is she killing someone? Today, even women do very bad things. This is not a good example for our people. See how ugly all of these are? Three people are trying to kill someone. No, this is not acceptable, especially with the problems police have today. (Respondent #44)

> This one is a bit riskier for this movie. It shows a lot of violence. I think most Egyptians would say that it is wrong, especially for a woman with a gun. Yusrā does not play violent roles or in violent films, so maybe people will interpret this as a defensive action. Maybe someone is attacking her. Anyway, the violent action and anger expressed here does not match the name of the movie written in big letters and bright colors. I don't like it myself. (Respondent #21)

All the respondents were opposed to women acting violently. Even expressing anger is a violation of gender identity for Egyptian women. For the most part, even those respondents who supported militarism in general were shocked at the violence displayed by women in these entertainment ads. This expression of female violence is another aspect of the demonization of women in the billboard ads. Respondents made it clear that only "evil" women are angry and violent.

VI. The Demonized Woman Versus the Idealized Woman

Respondents believed that rather than reflecting the idealized beauty and character of the "good" woman, most billboard ads depicted "evil" women. Respondents were angry with what they perceived as the demonization of Egyptian women. They said that the worst qualities typical of "evil" women were being flaunted at the lowest, even immoral, standards in order to attract men's attention, and ultimately, to sell products.

In particular, the respondents objected to the images of well-known belly dancers, singers, and actors, most of whom they believed to be prostitutes and "evil" women. Many respondents blamed Westerners and/or Gulf Arabs for this trend in advertising, catering to the carnal desires of low class, uneducated men. They also believed that Gulf Arabs, and to a lesser extent, Westerners, promoted prostitution in Egypt because they like to spend their summers in Cairo. Some of the respondents believed that foreigners are influenced by these trends to believe that all Egyptian women are immoral. In fact, some respondents who had lived in the Gulf Arab states reported being treated very badly because the locals there believed that all Egyptian women are prostitutes. The following remarks are characteristic of comments made by respondents and reflect the beliefs and values outlined above:

> You know, when these Gulf Arabs see these pictures and movies, they think that Egyptian women are dancing and making sex all day long and that they are all like this, very indecent. My colleagues in Sa'udi Arabia were laughing at me and saying that we are all bad here. What I can tell them? We are not for sale or for trade. We are human beings and I am angry about this; I hate all Egyptian actresses for this reason. The films are about drugs and sex and violence. There are no films about mothers and daughters and sisters or discussing the troubles of the people. You know, Susan, we are ordinary people here in Egypt. Why they don't show ordinary people, good people? No, Egyptian movies are very bad these days and not about real people. (Respondent #47 for photo #30)

> Laila 'Alwī is vulgar. I don't like her movies. She uses her body and isn't a good actor. There are a lot of rumors about her. One of them is that she lets rich Arabs commit acts of sodomy on her for money. Who knows? This is what people say. She's very fat, a *gamūsah* [water buffalo]...[M]en like her because she is vulgar. She is very fat and she uses her body in very sexually suggestive ways. Men like to dream about having sex with Laila 'Alwī. I heard that some young women try to imitate Laila 'Alwī in her hairdos and make-up and even in some of her behavior. She uses far too much make-up. I think she dyes her hair, too. I don't like this. (Respondent #28 for photo #27)

> She is very popular with men, but not with women. Most of the time, you find that what men like and what are pleasant to men are not pleasant to women. You don't feel easy watching a woman doing such things. You feel embarrassed in a way, especially when there are hints and sexual insinuation and words given in an indirect way. People are laughing and clapping their hands in the cinema when they get the message. It is not the kind of movie you want to watch in the cinema. Movies in the cinema in the last few years deteriorated and went down...This [film] is for men, though. Women would not go to see her films...They are not convincing stories. They are not realistic. They are not stories you may find everyday in our real life. They give us the kind of people you would not meet in real life...[T]hey give you scenes of her dancing and sleeping with someone in bed, you know...It is not professional. (Respondent #25 for photo #30)

> This is terrible. This is what I was talking about, that the woman is portrayed [in these ads] as a dancer-whore. Fīfī 'Abdū is just a walking sex symbol. She is half-exposed, supposed to be an attraction for men. This is not how *baladī* women look, not how educated ones look. The name, "*Qadārah*" is also antagonizing. This means, literally, "Commander". The woman cannot be a commander here, really; this is strange. Maybe this is just to be provocative and excite men. I don't like this; it is degrading. (Respondent #3 for photo #32)

> These [ads] attract people's attention. They would definitely attract Egyptians, whether they like them or not; and I think they would even attract foreigners. They all focus on sex, violence, or drugs. Even though these are not good topics, people want to see them. Maybe

> it is because they are taboo subjects in this society and none of it is on t.v. So you have to go to the cinema to see this kind of stuff. There is some on Israeli channel[s] and other satellite programs. But the average Egyptian is not going to have a satellite dish. It's also mostly men who are attracted to this sort of stuff. Women would find it offensive, but they would still be attracted to look at the ads; and they may even watch it if their husbands want them to. (Respondent #17 for photo #30)

Many respondents were also bitter that foreign entertainers dominated the Egyptian entertainment industry, mainly because the men who finance these activities are foreigners, primarily Gulf Arabs. They said that even if well-known Egyptian entertainers were in a production, they got second or third billing after foreigners. This was particularly true for singers, though it is also becoming the trend for actors and dancers.

> This one, she is an Arab, not Egyptian...The problem is that people believe there are too many foreign, Arab singers invading the market and Egyptian singers are getting second class status. It's hard for Egyptian singers to get famous now. One of the reasons for Arab singers to have this kind of status is that a lot of Gulf Arabs come here to Cairo for entertainment and they have the money, so owners of nightclubs want to attract this kind of money and so they know that they could enjoy Gulf singers or Arab singers and this is why they recruit them. One of the main problems is that they have to have their names written before the names of Egyptian singers who are better known and in the business longer. You know that where your name appears is a very important issue, especially in movies and theatre and what have you. I have heard her name before, but I haven't heard her voice or don't know where she comes from. I would assume that she's either from the Gulf or from Morocco. These are the two places, probably from Morocco. We have quite a number of Moroccan singers...To have such a big ad takes much money. She must be backed by Arab money. For this reason, I don't like it, not because there is anything wrong with the picture of the woman. She's ok here, but she's foreign. (Respondent #19 for photo #29)

All the respondents concurred that too much make-up, indecent attire, and sexually provocative poses are indicative of being a prostitute and/or entertainer, particularly a belly dancer. They also all concurred that belly dancing is the lowest status and social role for women, and the epitome of the "evil woman." For most Coptic Christians and many Muslims, particularly the fundamentalists, any kind of dancing is forbidden because it is sinful. This belief is a major factor in how respondents conceptualized belly dancers, as indicated in the following representative comments:

> *Ṭab* (of course), look at her as if she is moving all her body to attract men. She is bare, naked, really. This is...obscene. She look like a sex slave here. I don't like woman to be slave to man. (Respondent #6 for photo #31)

> This is belly dancing...I don't like any dancing at all. Maybe it is due to my nature. I don't like to watch dancing...I am not interested in this subject...I never dance, not at all. I don't try to dance because I can't go with it...Yes [dancing is immoral] because our society think it is and our tradition say so and make us not prefer that. (Respondent #14 for photo #14)

> Dīna is a dancer. I don't like this belly dancing. It is wrong. It is just for sex, to entertain men and give them bad ideas about women. She looks very bad here. I think she is making men

> want to see her with this picture. She is not innocent. Maybe she is a very clever businesswoman, but this is not right way. I don't like such ads. (Respondent #5 for photo #24)
> Yes, here they are dancing. This is immoral. This is unacceptable in Islam. Dancing is evil. She is naked here, you see? No, I don't like this one at all. (Respondent #44 for photo #30)

Some respondents welcomed the trend away from having belly dancers at weddings, as urged by the Islamic fundamentalists, while others had mixed feelings about it.

> They do not show them on t.v. anymore. If it is on t.v., it would be a very small clip. There are some films with them, but they are not as common as it used to be. There is a trend away from this. It's true that most people want a belly dancer at the wedding because this is part of the tradition. Some very religious people do not have them, but most people say we have to have them because it is customary. My sister's husband did not want a belly dancer at the wedding, but his mother insisted that they have one. So when the dancer danced, he went outside until it was over. (Respondent #33 for photo #24)

While most of the women conceded that most actors and singers do wear too much make-up, often dressed indecently, and sometimes were sexually provocative, they also lamented the fact that acting and/or prostitution are the main roles open to belly dancers. Some respondents acknowledged that for many poor women who wish to improve their standard of living, these social roles are the only escape from poverty aside from marrying a rich man, as evidenced in these comments:

> In Egypt, dancing is a very low profession. Fīfī 'Abdū comes from a very poor family. She was abused and neglected. When she was eleven, she ran away from home and another woman took her in and taught her how to belly dance. She makes lots of money still with her dancing. She started making movies, but she doesn't dance in her movies. She even does interviews on t.v. I saw one in *Ramadān* where she told the story of her childhood and how she doesn't want her daughter to be a dancer and have the same type of hard life she has had. Maybe she is trying to prove that she can be something better than a belly dancer by acting, but I don't think she can act. She is vulgar, no matter what she does. She is so fat, it is disgusting. In this picture, she is fat and ugly. She shouldn't expose herself like this. It isn't decent. Fīfī 'Abdū hosted Sylvester Stallone in Egypt. I wonder how he could stand her. Even her voice is like a man's voice. She must really use *hashīsh*. Anyway, a lot of actors here use drugs. She looks like a *mu'allimah* with a *shīshah* shop here. There's nothing *chic* or classy about her. This is just playing up to the lowest interests of men. (Respondent #28 for photo #32)

> In general, belly dancers in Egypt have a low status because people think they are loose women and not decent. I think that most of them are from very poor families and they do this for money; but even when they get rich, they keep doing it. Also, some rich women seem to like belly dancing. (Respondent #38 for photo #32)

> When we see someone wearing a lot of make-up, we think she is a dancer or a prostitute. Dancers have low social status. If she comes from a decent family, her parents won't let her work this kind of thing. So she has to come from a low class. She thinks this is a way of raising her standard or starting a career, and it pays well. Dancers are very rich. They get paid well and they get gifts even in the form of money when they are watched. Have you seen men

> give money to dancers? It's a kind of old habit, but they give them a lot of money to show off, *ṭab'ān* (of course), to show they are rich and to win admiration from others in the audience. Most of the movies show dancers sitting with men at tables after dancing. She may escort one of them. This is the way they figure in the movies. I haven't met a dancer in real life. I don't know. (Respondent #25 for photo #14)

Because acting is considered a slightly higher status and more decent occupation than belly dancing, many belly dancers also make movies and try to become actresses. Singing is also considered better than dancing, and so many singers also try to become actors. Some respondents were very critical of women who did this. Thus, some respondents had mixed feelings about entertainers, as reflected in these comments:

> Egyptian girls like to belly dance, but I have never heard of a girl who wants to be a belly dancer because it is considered an unclean job. They wear bad clothes and dance in a vulgar way. Most of them come from poor families and they do it for money. Very few of them studied dancing in a school. On talk shows, they say that they are from poor families and this is the only way for them to make money. Even though some become millionaires, they keep dancing because it has become ingrained in them by then. They must either get used to it or like it and don't want to stop even when they can. (Respondent #40 for photo #24)

> Dancers are looked at like whores, like really cheap women. The women themselves are not like that, but this is what people think of them. I think this is a bit sick. Dancing in a cabaret is seen as sinful. Men would come onto them and they might even go with men; but even if they don't, they seduce men emotionally. Maybe this happens and maybe not, but it isn't the fault of the women...It shows another part of the society that is sort of undercover. People of the younger generation see this stuff. They want to see dancers and it gives the wrong impression of women. They are portrayed as cheap. Then, these young people think that this is how women really are...It's women from the lower class who are dancers because they don't have very many alternatives, so they take up dancing as a job. (Respondent #17 for photo #14)

> I don't think Fīfī 'Abdū can act, anyway. It's better for her to be a dancer, you know, acting is more respectable here in Egypt than dancing. Maybe she (Fīfī 'Abdū) wants to be more respectable. Maybe she wants to put herself up. She is illiterate, anyway. (Respondent #25 for photo #34)

Despite the strong social norm that entertainers are low class and immoral, a few of the younger respondents enjoyed watching belly dancing and even imitated their hairstyles. Less judgmental than their elders, they were more willing to ignore the traditional religious admonishment, as evidenced by this respondent's comment:

> I know her. She is pretty and I like her. It's an ad for a video cassette, not a music tape, because she is a dancer, not a singer. She's a belly dancer. It is *ḥarām* (forbidden). She won't go to heaven; she'll go to hell. I like to watch it sometimes, but not all of them. Dīna is good, and I like to watch her. She is very pretty. I like it. Why not? It's *ḥarām*. This is life. It doesn't bother me. They look like real women. They are a role model for women, especially young women; they try to copy their hairstyles and so on. It doesn't bother me. (Respondent #6 for photo #24)

While most respondents agreed with the norm that most female entertainers -- whether actresses, singers, or dancers -- are stereotyped as "loose" women in their private lives as well as in their public ones, a few respondents decried this characterization of actresses and dancers, and to a lesser extent also singers, as prostitutes. Rather, they believed that acting and dancing are professions which require talent, training, and a great deal of effort. Nevertheless, they also believed that, in general, the newer and younger belly dancers and actresses were far less talented than the older ones who were popular before the 1970's, and that the primary motive for dancing and acting today is to become rich. These respondents said that newer dancers and actresses used their bodies to attract men, were openly sexually provocative, vulgar, and were not good actors or dancers. They contrasted this with the older generation which was perceived as professional, talented, decent, and moral. Thus, while they believed that belly dancing did not have to be a low status role, they conceded that it had become very low status because of the corruption which has resulted from so much Gulf Arab money being invested in the Egyptian entertainment industry. Ironically, some respondents believed that Western belly dancers are more professional and more decent than Egyptian ones, and so have become very popular with the Egyptian middle classes.

> Dancing itself is not a profession and is not something good to do if you have any other choices. Egyptian men like to go to see dancers, but they don't want their wives or daughters to be belly dancers. They think that these women are prostitutes. (Respondent #27 for photo #24)
>
> I've heard of this belly dancer, Dīna. She is well known now. They call her the "university graduate dancer". I've seen her dance at weddings and on t.v. she's good, but not like the good old ones like Samīyah Gamāl, Tahīyah Kārīwukā, etc. They are very good. They dance very slow and traditionally, and not in a sexy way. These days, they dance short dances and are too sexy. (Respondent #1 for photo #24)
>
> I like Suhair Zākī. The modern ones are not good belly dancers. I don't like most of them. The new ones don't really know how to dance. They just jump around and use their bodies to attract men. The old ones were real dancers and professionals. Most people in Egypt think that belly dancers are low status and loose women. I don't agree, but this is the common opinion. I judge belly dancers by their dancing ability and costumes, not because they are dancers. (Respondent #39 for photo #24)
>
> As a dancer, she (Fīfī 'Abdū) is ok. I prefer thinner ones, more beautiful ones. As I told you, I prefer the foreigners as they are more respectable. Egyptian dancers have big bellies, that's why they call it belly dancing! It is not so refined. (Respondent #25 for photo #34)

Interestingly, one well-known dancer, Dīna, has a university degree in music and dance. She choreographed dance routines from Pharaonic art which she has studied. She also makes her own costumes, again, fashioned on those depicted in Pharaonic art. Few respondents were aware of this, but even most of them were quite suspicious of her because it seemed like a *non sequitur* to them: a university graduate who belly dances. Furthermore, even Dīna's body, which is slender, is atypical for a belly dancer. For most respondents, because Dīna is a belly dancer, she is an "evil" woman, a status which could not be overcome, not even by her "good" attribute of being well-educated nor sympathy for being thin. Here are some of the comments respondents made about Dīna as she is depicted in her ad (photo #24), first the positive ones and then the negative ones:

> She isn't offending me in any way. She's a dancer. She's dancing to the music of the best musicians in the country, so what's wrong with this? I hope she has their authorization to use their names here. I've seen her dance. I don't like her. She's too thin. She does not have the grace. I prefer a woman with grace. Dīna is too uptight. She doesn't have ease of movement. Dancing is not just mechanism of dancing. The fact that she wiggles is not the essential things. She has to communicate that she is enjoying it and easy, naturally. Dīna gives me the impression that she is a *khawāgah* (foreigner, Westerner) who learned how to dance. Oriental dancing, you need to believe the dancer that she is enjoying, that she is nice. Foreign dancers are not convincing at all. To them it is just steps. They don't have spirit, our spirit. We don't feel their dancing. Christmas night in the Marriott is where I saw Dīna. I didn't like her. Dīna's face is not appealing. It is, *bardu*, projects a nervous person, too uptight. She's not a beautiful woman. (Respondent #21)

> Actually, she is graduated from the university. This is the exception to the rule. She is known by the name..."*Gāma'ayyah*" ("university woman"). She uses this name. She is preparing an M.A. thesis in Egyptian folklore dancing at Cairo University. This is what she announces. I don't know the truth...I have seen her dance. She is good in dancing and good in wearing naked, almost naked dancing suit. It's not the traditional one we know the dancers by...Dancers do not depend on the beauty of their face much. She should have the qualifications of the dancer only. Faces don't count...She pretends to be respectable, but when you see her dance at weddings, she is not respectable at all; she is not. (Respondent #25)

> They call her "*ar-Raqasah al-Gāma'ah*", which means "university-educated dancer."..She wears very different dress, not the traditional dress for belly dancing. She dances in shorts, for instance...I saw her in phosphoric colors...It's a different image she is trying to create. (Respondent #26)

As indicated above, some respondents were not certain that Dīna did, in fact, have a university degree. One well-educated elite woman made this comment:

> I know Dīna. I don't think she dances well. She dances in *suaré* dresses. She doesn't act. She is ugly and vulgar and low class. She is only there because she is blonde and has green eyes and a good figure. She isn't talented. She's very stupid. She was on a game competition on t.v., and she doesn't have a brain in her head. She can't even dance. She is pitiful. This isn't a good ad for a dancer. She is trying to project an educated image, but I doubt that she has a university degree. Here, she is trying to look better than she is. I recognize her, but she's got protruding teeth and here they don't show. She is uglier than this picture. (Respondent #51 for photo #24)

As previously mentioned, some respondents liked belly dancing very much, believing that it is a legitimate art and part of Egyptian culture. These respondents enjoyed dancing at weddings and other celebrations and family events. Some even belly danced at home for enjoyment and exercise. While some believed that it is a joyful custom, others believed that it is a serious art, requiring demanding training and talent. In fact, some respondents who never belly danced themselves enjoyed watching professional belly dancers because they appreciate it as an art. Nevertheless, most respondents acknowledged that the climate has changed dramatically during the 1980's so that belly dancing has become very controversial. Some respondents bemoaned this development while others welcomed it.

> We have this impression that belly dancers are like prostitutes. They have a bad reputation in this society. Even my mother used to tell me that her mother always told her the one who dances, reduces herself. This was, you see, the mother of my grandmother. Now all of my little cousins dance at birthdays. See how things changed? When my mother tried to dance at birthdays, her mother slapped her and said it is forbidden. Now they applaud her. So you see things change over time, but not the value that belly dancers have a bad reputation. People have become more lenient. You can dance at home and at a party, but not for a job. (Respondent #26 for photo #27)

Some respondents pointed out that belly dancing is really a Turkish (Ottoman) custom, not an Egyptian one. Furthermore, some of the respondents were proud to point out that while belly dancing is a common activity in Lower Egypt, particularly in Cairo, it still is not done in Upper Egypt. This was a source of pride for the *Sa'īdī* respondents, who believed that their identity as Egyptians was more authentic because they have retained their traditional, indigenous dances and costumes rather than adopt those imposed by foreign rulers.

> ...I have never seen her (Dīna) dance on t.v. In fact, I have seen belly dancing on t.v. It's nice. I like it, but we have only stick dancing and horse dancing in our village at weddings. No one belly dances in our villages [in Upper Egypt]. (Respondent #36 for photo #24)

> Belly dancing is no concern to me. It's a job, a way of making money. It's ok, but it doesn't have anything to do with me. There is no belly dancing in Minyā or [anywhere else in] Upper Egypt. It is not part of our culture. We have the men doing stick dancing and we have horse dancing [from the Arabs]...Women will not belly dance [in Upper Egypt] the way they do in Cairo. It is considered a very low profession and not good for women to do. Many people turn t.v. over or off when this comes on, especially good Muslims. (Respondent #31 for photo #24)

Most respondents complained bitterly that the images and roles of women in the entertainment industries in Egypt are completely unrepresentative of ordinary Egyptian women. They lamented the demonization of women, their objectification, and the negative repercussions this had for them in everyday life. They believed that it gave ordinary men a distorted and negative understanding of women and that it encouraged men to treat women badly. The blame was placed squarely on the shoulders of rich men, mostly Gulf Arabs, who bankroll the Egyptian entertainment industry, which is the center of this industry for the entire Middle East. Here are a few representative comments:

> Egyptian women are not like this, not at all. This gives people a wrong idea about us. These films make a lot of money and I think uneducated people like this, the workers mostly, but I think some of the rich Arabs come here to see such films. They don't allow this in *Sa'udīyah* (Sa'ūdi Arabia). But it is not good for us. (Respondent #12 for photo #31)

> You know, most people now have the [satellite] dish and they see naked women from abroad. They are not that desperate for such scenes. Art should serve society. Our films should be related to life, close to life, dealing with problems like working women dealing with children and life. Not all women are dancers and singers. Maybe producers think that ordinary people's lives do not have exciting things like this. Most servant girls do not make their own way in life, not even as dancers. So this is very far-fetched. Most of the actresses do not like parts in which they appear to be working wives or pregnant or a woman with children or [a] sick woman. They stick to very limited type of people and they vary on this theme. Ordinary women are not seen as worthy of being entertainment. (Respondent #24 for photo #31)

> It (the entertainment industry) is just pandering to the uneducated and ignorant men, Egyptians and those Arabs from the Gulf who have a lot of money and no education. They are becoming the main force in determining the path of the cultural industries. Educated people no longer go to plays or the cinema because there is nothing decent to see. (Respondent #3)

Finally, respondents also complained bitterly that not only do the entertainment industries demonize women in general, but ordinary women are increasingly subjected to demands by their husbands that they imitate entertainers at home. As most Egyptian women are pious, these demands put them in a precarious situation. If they did not comply with their husbands demands, they would likely be divorced. If they did comply with their husbands demands, it would violate their religious convictions and jeopardize their status with God. Women who were forced to entertain their husbands in this manner kept it secret from all but their most trusted female friend(s), as indicated in the following stories:

> Men will like this movie because such things are forbidden. They will go out of curiosity to see such things. When a woman sees a film like this, she can imitate this sort of behavior in order to keep her man. Women go there to be educated to learn something, if there is anything to learn about what men want!...Yes, it's something unreal. It is illusion, but it is exciting. I think many people like things which are forbidden or not real. I am one of them. When a couple goes to such a film, the man will tell the wife, "Can you see what this woman is doing?" This implies that the man wants his wife to act like this actress in order to keep him. Of course, some women dislike this very much, but some women like it. Some women will do anything to keep their husband's happy. (Respondent #27 for photo #31)

> I even heard of a strange incident of a police officer whose wife was veiled even before marriage. She wore the long veil. He all of a sudden started staying up all night and making phone calls and his wife was doubting him that he had an affair with a belly dancer. On day, he came home and told his wife and he had a belly-dancing costume with him and he asked her to change the color of her hair into blonde and to wear make-up and belly-dancing costume for him. She was upset, but she did it because she was afraid her husband would have affairs otherwise. So she did what he asked. It's awful. I don't believe it! She actually changed the color of her hair from black to blonde because he wanted this. What can she tell her father? *Yānī,* I mean, they are very religious people. She is a very pious woman. There is something attractive about the image of a belly dancer, I think. I don't know, but some men seem to like this -- for an affair, but not for a woman he would marry. I don't think he [the police officer] had enough money to have an affair with a belly dancer. Police officers have moderate salaries. I'm not sure if he really had an affair or not, or it was a condition to drop the affair that his wife wear this outfit and change her hair from black to yellow. Anyway, it must have been financial. If he had a choice, I am sure he would have the affair.

(Respondent #26 for photo #31)

In fact, respondents said that all Egyptians are affected by this demonization of women in the entertainment industry. While all respondents complained that it was more difficult for women to go out in public because the hostility they faced from men has increased significantly over the past decade, most respondents from the middle and elite classes blamed uneducated men. These sentiments are captured in the following comment by an upper-middle class respondent:

> Actually, what I don't like about them [the ads] is that most of the women's pictures are very, what I say, they are not ordinarily dressed, actually. They are either very bare...Most of them are like this in all the pictures I see. They have bare chests and big breasts, just to attract men to it. You should go to see it because it's a good director or good actor, and not because she's looking seductive. But, unfortunately, this attracts a certain class, and that's why they are still doing it. Actually, the low middle class males, not females, because those are the ones who go to the cinemas. Most of the women are afraid to go because it is a bit, somewhat, nosey, curious; they give women a hard time in cinemas, they do. So women watch movies on videos and men go to the movies on their own. Men like to flirt when women are around because they are not used to women being around, especially on the main floor. Women don't usually go there; so, if they do, the men get excited and flirt with them and give them a hard time and use bad money. So if women go, they go with men, usually their husbands, boyfriends, or fathers or a big gang of women so none of these man can bother them. This is in the downtown cinemas...The image of the women in the films is always the same. It has always been like this, but I don't like it at all. They are seductive figures, very feminine. They only touch the very feminine part of them, their bodies, just their bodies. It's really obvious they are just sex objects. It's an unfair thing. Maybe it's realistic in that that is the way she is in the movie, but women are not all like this, and not like this all the time. Why don't they show other types of women? They often choose the most seductive, most attractive-to-men picture of the woman from the film, even if it was a very short thing in the movie. As I said, Laila 'Alwī is very vulgar. She always plays the seductive woman. She is very fat, but most men here like fat women. They don't like thin women...She is portrayed here dancing, being seductive, sexy, but vulgar. This movie would never play at the expensive cinemas...Only men would go to such a movie. This plays mostly at downtown cinemas, mostly the cheap ones, for the workers, *yānī.* I heard about it [this film]. I think this is just sensationalist stuff to attract men. I don't think women will go to the cinema to see this. I don't think women would even watch it on t.v. It is not realistic, not serious, just sensationalist, to make money. (Respondent #16 for photo #27)

Demonization of women in the entertainment industry was a serious concern for respondents, not only because it presented a false image of Egyptian women, but because it also affected how they were treated in everyday life. Hence, it was a major topic of discussion during the interviews, as evidenced above.

VII. Conclusion

Although eliciting respondents' reactions to billboard depictions of women, including respondents' views about entertainers, was not the purpose of showing them the photographs of billboards, this research instrument was very effective in prompting respondents' views about how women should behave and what is morally acceptable for women. Respondents' feelings and ideas about the images of women in the billboards appearing in the Cairo area during the period of this research were generally extremely negative. They disapproved of them, believing that they were immoral and unacceptable in both Islam and Coptic Christianity. Not only did most of the billboard images of women depict entertainers, but they were presented in ways and in roles which were degrading to women, and were highly problematic for the respondents. One respondent sums up much of the discontent felt by respondents about this in the following comment:

> Yes, it's immoral. I don't like for respectable woman to be like that in a photo... [I]t drives men to have sins in mind even if they are good men. Maybe it will affect their moral behavior. They will have a bad, an animal desire towards their girlfriends. Woman is not a body; woman is more respectable than a body; woman is a soul, something great. It's very cheap advertising. The one who took the photo wants to make money, but from whom? From mechanical boys [mechanics], a bad standard of youth, bad laborers, mechanics, plumbers, this type of people love this type of film very much because of the photo. When they go to the film, they are not interested in the story, but only in pictures of women's bodies. But for others who have better aims in life, they will not like this film and probably not watch it. Low levels of society like this stuff. This actress is popular and so many women imitate her -- to be fat like her, use make-up like her, and use her hairstyle. However, there are others like me who will think differently. Some women even imitate her dancing. To me, I never danced, even alone. I don't like it. It's a religious matter. Dancing is absolutely forbidden in my religion (Coptic Christianity). If you are in a high class party and you dance, not alone like belly dancing, it may be ok, but it is really forbidden. It must be done in a slow but respectable way. I will not move my body if I dance...
>
> Also...when I am beside any movie [theatre] which shows these films, I see a lot of them [workers] in front of the movie [theatre] and I find from their clothes they are a laborer or a student. If he is just a worker, I can also tell from his face. Laborers may not be dirty, but the colors they use, the style of clothes and the hairstyle is different from the high levels...By the way, I don't like high levels because they have good money -- no, absolutely not. On the contrary, I am on the side of the normal people like me. Maybe I have friends who don't have any money, but I respect them very much, but I am against those who use bad behavior and bad words. I say, "*Ḥadritak*" [sir/mister] and "*Min Fadlak*" [please] even with *farāg* [workers who bring coffee and tea at work] and anyone like him -- the same as professor. I treat both exactly the same, no difference...I am afraid of the youth aged 15 - 20. I am afraid very much because they became not wise; in fact, [this is so] from 13 or so even. Boys, not girls, and boys who are working in low levels. They left school to work and became and behave in bad ways, smoking, strange to find small boys working on minibuses smoking. He needs money and at the same time he smokes, not only to smoke but to have bad habits like *ḥashīsh*. I became very insecure with such people and am far from them on the street...I think [this ad] is awful, *yānī*. It is stupid, really. She [Latīfa] is another singer, *yānī*, some say she is also immoral. I heard that she has an affair with Mubarak's son. Can you imagine! This is a big scandal for the family, and even for Egypt. She is not even Egyptian! I don't like these people [entertainers]. (Respondent #2 for photo #27)

Throughout this chapter, respondents have expressed their strong objection to the demonization of women in billboard ads as well as in the entertainment industries in general. Overwhelmingly, women are portrayed in the most negative manner: wearing indecent attire and too much make-up, looking sexually provocative, exhibiting masculine and/or inappropriate characteristics, and engaging in occupations and social roles which are considered immoral and degrading. Billboard ads depicting violence and the use of various drugs, particularly by women was also vehemently opposed by all the respondents. While these characteristics do mark a woman as "evil", respondents complained that most Egyptian women are not like this at all. Respondents believed that this distorted view of women influences men and encourages them to misbehave with women, even with their own wives. Thus, respondents believed that negative images of women in the mass media contributed to the increased aggression aimed at women in general. The consensus amongst respondents indicated that socio-economic variables were irrelevant to their opinions about what constitutes an "evil" woman, though many of them believed that it is male desire which creates this phenomenon.

Some middle and upper-middle class, but no upper class, respondents smoked, primarily the middle-aged. Lower and lower-middle class women could not afford to smoke and did not desire to do so, though most of their husbands and fathers smoked heavily. This was a major bone of contention within these families. There was also variability amongst respondents regarding sexuality issues as taboo.[2] In general, the lower and lower-middle class respondents were more conservative. There was great variability amongst the middle class respondents, again reflecting their conflict over "authentic" identity. Those who were more literalist in their interpretation of Islam, including the *muḥaggabah*, were most rigid in maintaining traditional taboos. The most liberal were generally the upper-middle and upper class respondents, particularly the university-educated. One upper class elderly woman was very liberal while the other was very conservative.

It is in respondents' linking of gender to character that Egyptians today show the most marked break with Pharaonic civilization and the greatest influence from Byzantine Greek culture, Coptic Christianity and Islam. It also reflects the extremely patriarchal nature of most respondents' conceptualization of womanhood. The Madonna-Whore dichotomization of womanhood typical of patriarchal societies globally is strongly entrenched in Egyptian society today, not only amongst those who support an Arab-centric and/or Islamic identity, but also amongst those who have a more Mediterranean-Hellenic and even modern, secular, Western identity.[3]

Chapter Six End Notes

1

While it is generally true that the uneducated and those without post-secondary education, "the workers" who do manual labor, are the main customers of *sh̲īsh̲ah* shops, the custom of spending leisure time in *sh̲īsh̲ah* shops -- often called coffee shops or cafés -- is a habit which all classes engaged in, with the exception of the poorest peasants who simply cannot afford to do so. Indeed, Naguib Mahfouz is still a regular at a particular coffee shop in central Cairo. The very rich, aristocratic and/or ruling elites belong to exclusive private country clubs now, though they were banned from them during the colonial period unless they were a *pash̲a*. Today, however, even most middle class men would not frequent a *sh̲īsh̲ah*/coffee shop because they would belong to a private club and/or prefer to socialize at home or in the homes of relatives and friends.

There is also a breakdown in the Mediterranean custom of men socializing with men in public places while women and children stay at home. Wives and children are more demanding of men to socialize with them as a family unit; there is less time for socializing because of economic pressures to work longer hours and at multiple jobs; and there is less disposable income. Some of the respondents who are the wife, sisters, and mother of a worker who frequents *sh̲īsh̲ah* shops complained bitterly to me about the time and money he wastes and the fact that smoking *sh̲īsh̲ah* is not healthy. In fact, many heated arguments had taken place in the household over this issue, and his mother smashed his *sh̲īsh̲ah* (water[illegible]pe) which he smoked at home and threatened to kick him out of the apartment if he did not stop smoking *sh̲īsh̲ah*.

Cigarette smoking is widespread amongst Egyptian men of all classes and regions, though fundamentalist groups frown on the habit. It is also not unusual for middle-aged educated women to smoke, though it is still uncommon for women in general to smoke and certainly not socially acceptable for women to smoke cigarettes.

Tobacco is not grown in Egypt, but there are Egyptian companies which manufacture cigarettes with imported tobacco. These "local" brands, such as "Cleopatra", are much cheaper than European and American brands; however, they are still expensive for the majority of Egyptians. A constable in the police force, for instance, would have to spend his entire month's salary (£E7) for two packages of "Egyptian" cigarettes. Middle and upper class Egyptians smoke only imported European or American cigarettes.

2

Keddie (1990) addresses sexuality issues as taboo.

3

This chapter consists primarily of data obtained from respondents and informants. Nevertheless, some aspects of these findings can also be found in the literature. For example, see Berger (1992), Lorius (1996), Sa'īd, (1990) for a discussion about Fīfī 'Abdū and belly dancing.

Chapter Seven
Ordinary Women

A pedestal is as much a prison as any other small place. Anonymous

The aim of education must be the training of independently acting and thinking individuals, who, however, see in the service of the community their highest life problem.
Albert A. Einstein.

Men, their rights and nothing more; women their rights and nothing less. Susan B. Anthony

If you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything.

I. Depiction of Ordinary Women in Billboards

While there is no consensus on the ideal female identity amongst respondents, as discussed in Chapters Four, Five, and Six, virtually all of the respondents complained that ordinary Egyptian women were either absent or inaccurately portrayed on the billboards. Even though there are great differences amongst Egyptian women from different social groups and classes, none of the respondents saw themselves reflected in any of the billboard images, whether the respondent idealized the *muḥaggabah*, the *baladī*, or the more modern, secular conceptualization of female identity. "Where are our sisters, our daughters, our mothers, our grandmothers?" they lamented. Thus, "ordinary" women is a category used by the respondents to refer to women like themselves and is reported here as such.

Eight billboard images of ordinary women were used to sell locally-produced products. The attire, make-up and accessories of the women in these eight billboards have been discussed in detail in Chapter Five, but none of them were seen by the respondents as accurate depictions of ordinary Egyptian women. Two other billboard ads portrayed women who more closely resembled the majority of ordinary Egyptian women; however, even these images presented problems for the respondents. One of these billboard ads (photos #15-16) was for a historical play produced by the government-owned Ballūn Theatre and the other (photo #18) consisted of two posters produced by the government for a family planning campaign.

In stark contrast to the demonized images of women in most entertainment advertisements, a woman pictured in the billboard ad (photos #15-16) for the historical stage play, "*Khadīwī*," seems to look like a typical middle-aged Egyptian woman, probably of lower-middle class status. She is wearing a *baladī* scarf (*mandīl*) and *gallābīyah*, though neither were the more typical black ones. She is not wearing make-up, and her face and skin color are very typically Egyptian. Respondents, however, seemed to be puzzled by the outfits worn both by the woman and the *khadīwī*. Many respondents believed that these were not very authentic outfits, and so many were confused as to the woman's social status and class. In addition, there are elements which are quite unusual and unacceptable about this ad: the woman is snuggling up to the *khadīwī*, a man of far superior social status, indicating that she is his lover; furthermore, since the actor (Samīha 'Ayyūb) is herself about seventy years old, she is far too old to be portrayed as anyone's lover, according to Egyptian norms. Regardless of her age, as an unmarried lover of a rich man, this woman would be considered a prostitute, the lowest status for a woman in Egypt. Thus, while the image of the woman *per se*, isolated from the other elements of the ad, is typical of ordinary Egyptian women and acceptable to them, the way this image is used is not typical and not acceptable. In fact, it was considered indecent, obscene, and immoral by many of the respondents. These various anomalies embodied in this particular ad are reflected in the following sets of comments, which typify respondents' views. The first example is typical of those who were completely confused about the status and class of the woman, the next comments are typical of those who believed that the woman was poor, though some thought it acceptable for her to stand close to the man while others objected, while the fourth example is typical of those who believed the woman was middle class, and finally the comment typical of those few respondents who believed that the woman was rich:

> I can't tell [if she is rich or poor] because she has no jewelry on. I imagine she might be rich because she is standing with the *khadīwī.* I can't tell if she is rich or poor from this picture. It doesn't matter to me if she stands next to him like this, but many people will object. (Respondent #51)
>
> I think this woman is supposed to be poor, maybe his servant. The *khadīwī* is probably having an affair with her. I think they all had many women, especially their servants. This is history. Some Egyptians will object to this picture, but it is ok for me. That was the life. (Respondent #21)
>
> ...but this woman is old...Her pose looks timid, so she must be poor. Her clothes are those of a poor woman, also...[E]ven if they are lovers, so what? Yes, it's ok; it's a decent picture. I like it. (Respondent #31)
>
> She is from the middle class. There is a level difference between them. I think so. Maybe she is helping him. Maybe she is his mistress. I don't know. I don't think she is his wife. (Respondent #47)
>
> This woman looks rich, but she looks very old. She looks older than the man, and this is not right. She should be younger and more beautiful. She looks like a rich woman. It would be better if she appeared much younger and more beautiful. I don't like this picture at all the way it is now. (Respondent #29)

Thus, respondents were confused about the social status of the woman depicted in this billboard (photos #15 and #16) because her attire was not authentic for any class. Furthermore, the relationship between the man and woman was also unclear. Although many respondents acknowledged that rulers had illicit sex with women from the lower classes, most of them concurred with the social taboo against displaying this publicly. Some respondents also complained that the woman should be young and beautiful, that it was ridiculous to show a well-known seventy year old actor in a romantic role. These observations indicate that the image projected in this ad is more of a demonized woman than an ordinary woman.

Eight billboard ads for local products depicted ordinary women. This includes the bride and groom ad for a furniture cooperative (photo #7), the "Blanco" ad for blankets (photo #21), the "Loulou" ad (photo #6), the "Līna" ad for blue jeans and casual clothes (photo #20), the Carmen ad for paper products (photo #10), the ad for eyeglasses and contact lenses (photo #9), another ad for eyeglasses (photo #8), and the ad for *muḥaggabāt* attire (photo #3).

Here is a comment, typical of those made by respondents about the lack of "believable" ordinary women in the commercial ads for local products:

> It [the woman] doesn't show, really..Actually, it's not expressive as I expect it to be, but the idea of it, I just like it. I like it to be in Egypt. It should be more expressive; I mean the way they done it is not really showing the woman. The one who doesn't know it wouldn't understand what it is, but I like the idea of it. Under our circumstances, it shouldn't show the product or a sexy woman. They should show a happy lady more clear. It should be a woman with a reasonable figure. They shouldn't be like the women in entertainment ads. It should [be] like average women, not movie stars. (Respondent #10 for photo #6)

The short-comings of these depictions of ordinary women have been dealt with at length in Chapters Four, Five, and Six. Here, it is sufficient to conclude that respondents did not like these ads because they did not depict ordinary persons in a believable manner. Not only was the art work of such poor caliber that the people did not look real, but details of facial features and expression, hairstyle, and attire were also either obscured or very unrealistic. Only the Carmen ad (photo #10) was remotely normal, *albeit* of an upper-middle class woman. The "Loulou" (photo #6) ad was unique in that it presented an abstracted, featureless image of a woman which was not realistic; however, there was nothing in the presentation of the woman herself which indicated she was "evil". While some respondents believed the ad to be inappropriate and even taboo because of the subject matter, they did not categorize the image of the woman as *per se* "evil". Neither did they identify a third category, and thus, this image fell into that of the "ordinary" woman. Furthermore, the women in at least five of these billboard ads (#7, 9, 10, 20, 21) also looked foreign, not Egyptian, in terms of their bodies and/or attire, which many respondents disliked. Finally, the woman in the "Blanco" ad (photo #21), purportedly that of a "modern" woman, also projected a demonized image of women very similar to those of the ads for entertainers, of the "evil" woman. Thus, most respondents complained that none of these ads really represented ordinary Egyptian women.

Finally, two sets of posters (photo #18 and photo #19) used in family planning campaigns depicted women as ordinary Egyptians. In one set of posters (photo #18), the women, as well as the men and children, are accurately depicted as ordinary Egyptians wearing clothing typical of the Delta (left) and the *Sa'īd* (right), but their expressions and behavior are contrived and unbelievable. The realistic aspects of the images of the people, such as the skin color, facial features, hair texture and type, clothing, and even the furnishings are diminished by the artificiality of their behavior and their excessive happiness. The respondents generally concurred that *fallaḥūn* (peasant) parents would not sit watching their children dance as they drink tea, because they are not child-centered in this way. Likewise, it is unrealistic to portray a *Sa'īdī* father playing with his children in this manner. Many of the respondents said that the people in the posters look too naïve and that it was not realistic to portray poor couples with only two children. In fact, many respondents pointed out that a poor family with only two children would be unhappy, not happy, about their small family size. While most of the respondents recognized these discrepancies, many of them said that it would be nice if people did behave like this, to be more child-centered, and if more of the ordinary people did have only two children. Interestingly, many respondents were not able to recognize the regional distinctions between the posters, believing instead that two scenes were better than one for trying to convince peasants to restrict their family size.

> ...[T]his one on the left doesn't make much sense -- a boy and girl dancing or jumping around. It doesn't make sense. I would have preferred showing the family with the father counting money, or showing he could save money through having a smaller family and put resources away for the future. That would help convey the message. (Respondent #19)
>
> Showing the children hanging on the neck of the father has nothing to do with small family size. That really, a father of two sits on the sofa beside his wife watching children dancing -- I don't know how often this happens with small or big families. It's pushing it too much. It's not realistic. There should be some material benefits of having small families, not just showing having more fun. Children of large families play more and are often happier than children in small families, after all. (Respondent #22)
>
> *Fallaḥūn* would never sit and watch their children dancing. They are trying to brainwash people into thinking they should do this. I don't think it would be effective. The picture on the right is better than this one on the left because it is somewhat more realistic. The father is entertaining the family. He is the center of attention. Children are getting enjoyment from their parents, not the other way around (as in the picture on the left). (Respondent #27)
>
> This is for family planning. I think this kind of advertisement is very silly. I think this will not have any effect on the target people. No one will stop to read it or to try to understand what this is trying to show them. It doesn't have any sense. People do not act like this. The parents are more relaxed with few children. (Respondent #23)
>
> These are not typical scenes for poor, illiterate families. They represent what middle class Egyptians want to turn illiterate people into more than anything else. They represent the wishes of the middle class, not the realities nor even the wishes of the poor. (Respondent #21)

While the people depicted in the first set of posters (photo #18) do typify the vast majority of Egyptians, most of the respondents were not from this low class. Thus, their understanding of the *fallaḥūn* and *Sa'īdīs* was generally inaccurate. Interestingly, however, the second set of family planning posters (photo #19) depicted a poor, pregnant woman with five children as someone whom the respondents believed looked too miserable, thin, ill, and with brownish-grey skin to be Egyptian. Many believed that this pregnant woman appeared Oriental, not Egyptian. The middle class woman with two children in the other poster, in contrast, was depicted as the ideal Egyptian beauty with red hair in an elaborate Western hairstyle, a small and oval face, white skin, and modern, Western clothes including a knee-length skirt, having a picnic in the park, even though this is an activity alien to Egyptians. Even the daughter in this poster has red hair, white skin, a small oval face, and fashionable Western clothes. The women in these posters were depicted as moral and decent in facial expression, body language, and dress, although some *muḥaggabāt* would object to the knee-length dress worn by the woman with two children (even though she was sitting on her bent knees so her legs were not visible.) Nevertheless, this set of posters, which was supposed to typify ordinary Egyptian women, one from the low class and one from the middle class, was seriously flawed, as some respondents commented. Others, particularly those with little understanding of the target audience, believed the ads to be very accurate.

> Yes, families in the *Sa'īd* (Upper Egypt) especially look like this, but you can see people like this even in Egypt (Cairo). Yes, to me, this is Egyptian, *mīyah, mīyah* (100%). We wear these kind of clothes and look like this. Some families have picnics like this. I have seen this picture often, all over the place, but not lately. It makes sense, and is very accurate. (Respondent #28)

> I saw people like this in Egypt in the villages. They were very sick and thin. These people look very Egyptian. I think this is a caricature, but it is still realistic. I like this ad. It shows how terrible it is to have large families. I like the family here with two children. They look very happy and the children look well-fed and happy with good clothes. (Respondent #46)

> I saw many people like this in Egypt, with large families and looking tired and sick like this. This picture shows that two children are enough. I think this may be effective with poor people, to show them to only have two children. Educated people do not need such pictures. Poor people keep having large families, though. They must stop. They usually keep having large families until they get boys. I saw many programs on t.v. that try to convince people to have fewer children. I think the people on the left look Egyptian, but the people on the right are not good-looking like Egyptians. Most Egyptians are better-looking than this. (Respondent #45)

Many respondents recognized that there was some exaggeration in the depiction of poor and middle class couples in the family planning posters, but believed that severe malnutrition and abject poverty are consequences which most low class Egyptians would face soon due to deteriorating economic conditions. They believed that despite the exaggeration, the posters would be effective tools in a family planning campaign.

Some respondents believed that the family planning posters would not be effective because they are not realistic and would not convince poor people to have fewer children. Some respondents also believed that direct face-to-face interaction and broadcast media were necessary components in such a campaign, that using posters alone would not be enough. Here, some respondents recognized that many of the politicians and bureaucrats who planned family planning campaigns as well as the medical personnel who implemented them did not have a realistic understanding of the target audience, hence, very little progress has been made despite thirty-five years of nation-wide family planning campaigns in Egypt.[1] The following comments were made by elite Egyptian women who have extensive experience with rural women. (Comments by illiterate respondents are given later.)

> Why would a *Sa'īdī* family think that five or six children is a large family? This is not a large family for them. They have twenty, *yānī*, can you imagine, twenty children? No, this is not enough for them. It is a small family to have five or six [children]...I think they [the government] wasted his [the artist's] time and all our money on this. Better to use t.v. and also to have nurses and women doctors talking to teenaged girls before marriage, *yānī*, not after the marriage. (Respondent #5)

> This ad is more meaningful for educated Egyptians than for the target audience, the illiterates. I don't think these pictures would convince illiterate people to have smaller families. First of all, the large family is not really a large family in the Egyptian context. Large families mean twenty children here, not five or six. Five or six children would be a small family in Upper Egypt, for instance. Secondly, the picnic setting and the clothes and red hair of the people in the family with two children would seem very unEgyptian to most poor people here. I don't think it is very effective as a family planning tool. (Respondent #21)

> I think it's over-exaggerated. The misery of the large size family in comparison to the small family is over-simplifying the facts. I don't see women with large families who are so miserable about it. Even the man here is miserable. I don't think this is so. It's just trying to exaggerate. The target people would not identify with it because the exaggeration is so much that they would think it is not us; it is somebody else. I don't think these are effective posters. These people could be Egyptians; even the red hair is ok. But it's as though the red hair goes with the two children, and it's not exactly like that. One can have two children with no trees. (Respondent #22)

Some respondents believed that the family planning posters were completely unrealistic and would not appeal to the target audience at all, primarily because the people depicted did not look Egyptian, as indicated in the following comments:

> The face looks like Korea or Philippines. Their nose [looks] like Japanese or Chinese or so. Even [the artist] it's Mustafā [a famous cartoonist], the picture is not Egypt. I don't think this works with us. Egyptians [do] not like such pictures. (Respondent #20)

Some respondents who supported a fundamentalist, literal interpretation of religion believed that children were gifts from God, and that any form of family planning is forbidden. They were particularly angry about the large-scale family planning campaigns run by the government since the mid-1960's.

> You know, children are from God. Every child born is from God. It is written from God how many children we have. So even we take these pills or not, our children are from God. No need for this [family planning campaign]. Everyone is born by God. We must not change his plan. Yes, [even to have 18 children], because God give them 18 children. No need to stop this. Sometimes there is rich families with many children. In Sa'udi Arabia, it is common to have 14 or 16 children. If they are rich or poor, there is no relation between the gift from God and number of children. Everyone is born as gift from God. If I am poor, everyone born will have his money from God. These are poor people, but to have less children will not make them rich and may make God angry. These people look poor and sick here. But this is a picture. It is not in life. I don't see such people here or in Sa'udi Arabia. I think they do these pictures to make people not like children. They want people to want small number of children. God will be angry. God help us to give us children, not us. Some people are rich,

> and they plan to have one child. The woman is not able to have a child, and I think this is God's way to punish such woman. (Respondent #50)
>
> Even our *bawāb* has six children and he thinks they are manna from Heaven. I think it might be more effective for middle class people, but not for the poor. The poor look at children as gifts from God. It's hard to change this attitude. (Respondent #33)
>
> If someone cannot read and he wants to have a large family, this will not change his mind. Many of them want big families because they want a big crowd and many children to call the father, "*Bābā*". I don't know why they want so many children. They think this is the wonderful thing in life to have so many children and so many grandchildren. (Respondent #47)

Some respondents discussed the reasons why poor Egyptians have so many children, particularly their desire for sons. They recognized that there is a class bias to the family planning campaigns, and that the state has been unable or unwilling to address the concerns of poor people which underlie their desire for large families. The first three comments are by illiterate women, the first and second by *Sa'īdī* women, and the third by a Nubian woman from Upper Egypt who had nineteen children, though only six survived. The last comment is from a single, middle class university student who is a Copt.

> This [picture] is an extreme. They are doing this to show the contrast between large and small families. My mother had ten children who survived, six boys and four girls. I wanted a daughter. She had three other ones who died. My husband's father married three women. The first wife had six children; the second wife had five children; and the third wife had one child. I would have been happy with two children if my second one had been a girl I had four boys until I got a girl. There is improvement with each generation. Families are smaller in general now. (Most families seem to have more children in order to have a boy, not a girl. You seem to be an exception.) Yes, in Upper Egypt, they used to kill girls when they were born because they thought it was a shame on the family. We are not like that here in Egypt (Lower Egypt). They have many children until they get boys [in Upper Egypt]. They cannot kill girls anymore, but they still consider them to be a shame to the family. Now everything is very expensive, so most people cannot afford to have large families. Nowadays, the man wants a boy and the woman wants a girl. In the past, men wanted many sons to help them with the agricultural work. Girls leave the family to live with their husband's family and so are not an asset for their own family. (Why are girls considered to be a shame on the family?) Boys can go out and do whatever they want and the families do not worry about them. Girls cannot do this. Families are always worrying about their girls getting pregnant. They are always worried that a man will convince their daughter to go with him and bring shame to his family. (Respondent #29)
>
> This man is very tired. She looks exhausted. No, [I haven't seen Egyptians looking like this.] The government is just exaggerating this a lot to make us stop and think about it. I do know a woman in my village in Minyā (Upper Egypt) who had twelve children. The doctor and other people were telling her not to have so many children. She was lining them up like cigars. Anyway, after her twelfth child, she died, so the doctor was right. The other family [in the picture] looks more healthy. It's supposed to make us stop to think that we will have a better life and healthier children if we have only two children. I think these pictures are good to make people stop to think that maybe two children is enough. The main problem is that those who have girls will continue until they get at least one boy. I am lucky because my

> husband doesn't care. He didn't want me to have so many children, but I want a boy. I still want a boy, but he doesn't want anymore children. I don't want another child now because my last pregnancy was very bad and I was very sick. This last child is now about four years old, and I don't know if or when I will have another one. One bad thing about girls is that you have to watch them all the time. They cannot be out on their own and we have to protect them. At least with boys, they can roam around on heir own and no one really worries about them. They can take care of themselves. [Here, in these pictures,] [t]he ones on the right look like they are from Cairo, but the others look like *Saʿīdī*s. (Respondent #31)

> Look how sick and tired they look and she is still pregnant! Yes, we call them sticks, *musalwīn*. They are very poor and don't have enough to eat. You see this girl here, 'Ibtisām, she is one of 18 children in the house across the street. Very large families like this are common in Egypt, especially in the past. You see, she is thin, but she is not so sick as the people in this picture. People liked to have large families, especially men. They married more than one wife to have many children. Men usually want many boys. If they get girls, they will think they are unlucky and keep having more children to get boys. I had very good health and had 19 children with no real harm to my health. I ate good country chickens and good food to be healthy. In the past, all the food was local and fresh. Nowadays, they have frozen things and foreign things. I don't like this. It has become very expensive to raise children now. In the old days, people had more money and things were very cheap. It did not cost money to have children. Most children did not go to school. Nowadays, children go to school and not to work. My two older girls only went to school until they finished grade 6 and then they had to stay home and work with me in the house. My husband would not allow them to continue with their education. I preferred them to go to school, but in those days, that was the norm for children only to finish grade 6. Now, children want to go to university. This means they cannot work in the house or outside for money. (Respondent #41)

> No, it would make them feel frustrated and angry. They know they are born poor and expect they will remain poor...they get only 200 pounds a month now and [do] not understand how they could get rich. They may feel like it would never work out regardless of their number of children. They see all the people with beautiful Mercedes with beautiful lives and they have to think to about what they are going to eat today and what they are going to feed their family. So when they see a picture like this, they would be frustrated and angry. I would feel so, and I would fee hurt, too. I mean, there is -- they are trying to tell these people to have fewer children to have a better life, but you don't guarantee them that they will have a better life, and there is no guarantee that they can have a better life if they have two children. It's sort of a lie the government has been giving to the people. Who's guaranteeing anything? It's just a lie. People know that. The lower class people, they, when you interact with them, they are so rude and so angry towards you and they just don't like you. You can't get along with them at all, and you can't even try. If you try, they say you have everything and you have no problems and they are the ones with all the problems. They feel the government officials are putting money in their own pockets for themselves and then they are blaming the poor for the problems of the country. They are just angry. Poor people are definitely very hostile to those who are better off. It's scary. (Respondent #17)

Virtually all the respondents were dissatisfied with the depictions of ordinary women in billboard ads. Most respondents were tolerant of a number of different types of attire, primarily as markers of social status and class and to a lesser extent of religious beliefs, as discussed in Chapter Five. Even though there was no agreement on one ideal female identity, particularly with regards to attire, there was general agreement as to what constituted an ordinary woman within each of the categories identified by respondents. While the women depicted in these ads were decently dressed and were supposed to represent ordinary women rather than entertainers, there were too many unrealistic aspects to their appearance. Thus, respondents did not believe they were much more acceptable than the entertainment ads, most of which openly demonized women.

II. Education and Language

A. Education

Education has proven to be a very salient variable in shaping the conceptualization of gender held by respondents as well as influencing their roles, particularly in the public sphere. Throughout this chapter and dissertation, numerous distinctions between those respondents with higher education and those with less education have been reported.

The respondents were eager to inform me about the importance of education for all Egyptians. The majority of Egyptians are illiterate, though the illiteracy rate for females is significantly higher than for males (ARE MOE, 1992:93-94; World Bank, 1991).[2] If given a choice, Egyptian men with at least primary education prefer a literate wife to an illiterate one. If economically feasible, illiterate couples also prefer that their daughters be educated as well as their sons. Egyptian women and men, however, concur that a wife should not have more education than her husband.

As explained by respondents, in general, this desire for education is linked to the desire for social mobility, which became a socially legitimate aspiration for all Egyptians during the Nāsir regime. The motivation for both education and social mobility stems from the extreme differences in social status, reward, power, and class as well as the extreme hostility amongst these social strata which has characterized Egyptian society for millennia. Until the 1950's, education was the privilege of a tiny, male elite who constituted the ruling class and its functionaries. The vast majority, over 90% of the population, had little hope of obtaining an education and social mobility, as the class system was relatively closed.

The uneducated were treated as subhuman and had virtually no human or civil rights. They lived in abject poverty, malnourished, chronically ill, ignorant, and passive-aggressive. They were used as slave (corvée) labor as recently as the mid-19th century and many remain virtually indentured farm laborers today, trapped in patron-client relationships which have existed as the norm in rural areas since the Roman era.[3] Child labor remains a common phenomenon.[4] As witnessed personally on many occasions and as reported by respondents with less than high school education, the educated continue to demonstrate great arrogance, verbal abuse, and even corporal punishment, including physical cruelty, in dealing with those beneath their status, particularly the uneducated.[5] So, from the point of view of the uneducated, there was nothing to lose and everything to gain by being educated. Even becoming functionally literate would allow an individual to be a step up the socio-economic hierarchy, enjoying a rise in standard of living and having power over subordinates. One illiterate respondent discussed how she tried to educate herself and help educate her children in order to change her life for the better:

> I noticed that some parents encourage their children to learn by keeping them busy and creating some kind of competition among the children to make learning interesting and keep them doing it. It also creates some entertainment for the parents, especially if they do not have a television. The fact that children are active means they have a lot of energy and we should channel it into learning. I don't watch television much, but I do watch programs about health. They have programs with physicians and nurses talking about illness and good hygiene. These programs are on every morning and I really like them...I don't like watching singing and dancing because I want to get more knowledge. I am not educated, but I want to get as much information as I can to help my children. That's why I watch as many educational programs on television as I can and listen to radio programs, too. I also go to classes at the mosque every week. Any way I can learn something, I do it. I must. (Respondent #29)

Although education has been free at all levels including the Ph.D. since the 1960's, only about 50% of school-aged children are, in fact, enrolled due to the high rate of population increase, the extreme overcrowding of schools, the near necessity of paying teachers for tutoring, and severe poverty making child labor an economic necessity for the majority of families (Cochrane, 1986:57;61; ARE MOE, 1992; World Bank, 1991:xv). Even though access to education as well as educational achievement have not improved since the 1960's, the desire for education has remained high and so has its importance socially. All respondents, no matter what their education, emphasized that education was extremely important in determining their opportunities and they wanted their own children to obtain as much education as possible.

The education of respondents is discussed in Chapter Three: thirty-five (68.6%) had some higher education and sixteen (31.4%) had less education. Prior to the 1960's, only those in the upper-middle class attended high school and university. It was unusual even for upper class women to attend high school and university prior to World War II. Thus, many of the middle-aged and elderly upper-middle and upper class respondents had attended academic high schools but not university. Therefore, age is another important factor, since older elite women are less likely to have post-secondary education than younger ones. Even young middle class Egyptian women are more likely to have some higher education than older upper class women. Thus, age, social class, and education are interrelated in a complex pattern. All the respondents, regardless of education, wanted their own children to obtain as much education as possible. In fact, some university-educated respondents had illiterate mothers. In general, the respondents had more education than their mothers and they wanted their daughters to have more education than what they had. The discrepancies between the education of respondents and that of their parents as well as between the education of respondents and that of their children was quite dramatic in many cases. In keeping with Egyptian social norms, all but one respondent had the same or less education than their husbands or fiancés. The gap in education, however, between respondents and their spouses was minimal, in sharp contrast with that between their mothers and fathers. For instance, 33.3% of respondents' mothers were university educated compared to 78.8% of their fathers. Here, it is evident that the democratization of access to education, the integration of women into the public sector labor force, and the state support for employment of women since the 1950's has, indeed, made significant progress in reducing the educational gap between marital partners. Likewise, the eleven university-educated respondents with children aged eighteen and older reported that all their children were enrolled in university or had completed university.

Prior to the 1952 Revolution, most schools were sex-segregated, except for some university faculties. After the revolution, however, most public primary and preparatory schools were not sex-segregated, and neither were many high schools. Post-secondary programs were also not sex-segregated. Many of the private schools, both Egyptian and foreign, however, remained sex-segregated. Because of the rigid and essentialist notions of gender held by most Egyptians, it is likely that sex-segregated education reinforces these types of gender identities and gender roles. Thus, respondents were asked whether their education had been sex-segregated or coeducational. While 75% of respondents reported attending co-educational primary schools, 56.3% attended sex-segregated preparatory schools and 97.7% attended sex-segregated high schools, despite the fact that many public high schools were not sex-segregated since the 1950's. Interestingly, age and class were not salient factors in predicting whether a respondent attended a sex-segregated school. Religious convictions and locale or choice of school were more important reasons.

Another way of assessing what type of schooling respondents received was to distinguish between government-run public schools, private Egyptian schools, private foreign-run schools (mostly foreign language schools) in Egypt, and schools attended abroad. Within government-run schools is an important sub-category which has been treated as a separate category here, that of the Egyptian government special experimental schools for the gifted (*al-madāris an-namūzagīyah*)[6]

Of the forty-four respondents with at least some high school education, just over half attended Egyptian public schools and three attended the special experimental school for the gifted (*al-madrasah an-namūzagīyah*). Twelve (27.2%) attended a private foreign language school in Egypt, three attended school abroad in an Arab country, and three in Europe. Not surprisingly, the respondents who had attended private schools and schools abroad all came from middle and upper-middle class families and their fathers were university-educated.

When the thirty-five respondents with children were asked what type of schools they sent their children to, eight (22.9%) sent children to Egyptian public schools, one (2.9%) to the special government experimental school for the gifted (*al-madrasah an-namūzagīyah*), twelve (34.3%) to Egyptian private schools, five (14.3%) to private foreign language schools in Egypt, three (8.6%) to schools abroad in Arab countries, two (5.7%) to schools abroad in the Arab countries as well as to Egyptian public schools, and one (2.9%) to school in the U.S.A. as well as attending Egyptian public school. Again, those respondents with no education sent their children to Egyptian public schools because they could not afford better alternatives, but it is noteworthy that even lower-middle class Egyptians make tremendous sacrifices to send their children to private schools in order to enhance their mobility. The growth of private schools has been phenomenal since the 1970's because of the inability of the state to accommodate all children and because of the generally low quality of state education (ARE MOE, 1992; Cochrane, 1986; World Bank, 1991). Furthermore, there has been a virtual mushrooming of private universities since 1992 legislation enabling it. Thus, despite the high aspiration for education and increased capacity of private schooling, educational access and educational achievement for the majority of Egyptians is actually diminishing from that of the 1960's and 1970's because of increased population and increased poverty. Hence, education remains highly prized in Egyptian society by all Egyptians.

These thirty-five respondents with children were also asked which languages their children spoke or were learning in addition to Arabic in order to ascertain their aspirations for their children's education. Nubian and Arabic are languages indigenous to Egypt, and so are not considered a foreign language in this study. While all Egyptian public schools include Arabic as a mandatory subject, they also introduce English at the preparatory level, and some also offer French and/or German. Students are expected to become proficient in one of these European languages by the time they graduate from high school. Because many Egyptians are dependent upon the tourist industry for their employment, the better their command of a European language, the better their chances for earning a living in the tourist industry, particularly in the private sector. Furthermore, the most prestigious university faculties such as medicine, offer professional programs only in English and others such as law offer programs only in French, so command of French and/or English is necessary.

Of the thirty-five respondents with children, 80% reported that their children spoke English. Not surprisingly, there was a relationship between respondents' education, class, and language(s) spoken by their children. The higher the education and class of the respondent, the greater the likelihood that her children would speak French, since that is the language of the upper class, and English, since that is the language of commerce. Illiterate respondents were more likely to have children who spoke only Arabic, while some also spoke Nubian.

A1. Variables Influencing Respondents' Education

In this section, various factors affecting the educational achievement of respondents are discussed. One of the most important factors influencing a woman's conceptualization of gender as well as her actual social roles is whether or not she has brothers. Egyptians of all religions continue to give strong preference to having sons because sons still inherit the bulk of family assets and because sons are still responsible for protecting and supporting their elderly parents. If a couple has no son, they are at the mercy of their male kin. Women who do not produce a son are more likely to be divorced. Thus, most women continue to have children until they have a son. Once a son is born, he is cherished and spoiled, preferred in every way over any of his female siblings. If there are no sons, however, daughters are often given greater freedom than if there was a son. Girls with no brothers are also more fortunate in being better fed and better educated.

Other factors which affect the amount of freedom, education, and the life chances of a girl in general are how many siblings she has and their ages, her birth order, and her mother's age. First-born girls are usually given less opportunity for education than their younger siblings because they are usually kept in the household to help with domestic labor as well as more likely to be married at a younger age. This is usually also the case for daughters born before the first son. Parents are often more willing to allow younger daughters to pursue education and postpone marriage. For some parents, this may be due to a certain "mellowing" and for others it may be partly due to generational differences, that younger daughters are more insistent on pursuing education than older ones and that older daughters may relay to younger siblings as well as their parents their regret at not having more education.

Except for the very privileged upper-middle and upper classes, the key to upward social mobility, whether through marriage or employment, is education, particularly university. Thus, gaining as much education as possible remains a high priority for most Egyptians. Therefore, respondents were first asked for their birth order, as well as the number, age, and sex of their siblings. Only seven of the respondents did not have any brothers, whereas ten had no sisters. Not surprisingly, 52.9% of respondents reported more brothers than sisters, compared to 25.5% who reported more sisters than brothers in their sibling groups. Only six respondents reported the same number of brothers as sisters in their sibling groups.

These data were further disaggregated to compare respondents with higher education to those with less education. The greater economic pressure felt by the lower classes to have sons to contribute to family subsistence and old age security was reflected here. Respondents with no higher education had a greater number of siblings in general than those with higher education; more daughters are born because child-bearing does not stop until sons are born. All but one respondent with no higher education (98.8%) had brothers; she was a high school student and an only child. In contrast, 81.3% of respondents with higher education had at least one brother.

In addition, the mother's age and education are also important in determining the respondents' number of siblings: older mothers had more children than younger ones, and educated mothers were more likely to have fewer children. Social class is an important variable since older mothers of upper-middle class and elite status had, at most, high school education. Most older mothers had little, if any, education, and they tended to have very large families, ten to twenty children. Thus, while educated, elite older women had fewer children, they still had four to eight children.

As indicated above, the discrepancy between educational achievement of many respondents and that of their mothers can also be accounted for by the age and social class of their mothers. For instance, elderly women with any education were more likely to be from privileged families, usually upper-middle or upper class. Middle-aged women with high school education were also, for the most part, likely to be from the privileged upper-middle and upper classes. Because economic security is guaranteed for upper class women, who are not expected to earn an income, they were less likely to pursue higher education than middle class women, who have far less economic security.[7] For the vast majority of illiterate mothers from the peasant class, however, the chances of their daughters achieving education beyond primary schooling are very slim. The respondents, in fact, reflected this social reality.

Furthermore, whether respondents and/or their siblings were born in rural or urban areas was also important, since families living in rural areas are much larger, on average, than families living in urban areas. Even the very poorest women are cognisant of the fact that it is too expensive to raise a large family today, particularly when living in a large city like Cairo. Their lack of access to food from their own gardens and/or extended kin living on farms means that they are dependent upon the cash economy, in which their position is very precarious. This is increasingly true of all social classes, though economic pressure to reduce family size is greater for poor families living in urban centers.

Because of the high incidence of divorce and remarriage, at least for men, as well as the legality of polygyny, respondents were also asked if they had any half-brothers or half-sisters. Of the five respondents who had half-siblings, three had both half-sisters and half-brothers, and two had only half-brothers. Two of the three respondents with half-brothers and half-sisters had post-secondary education, as had their parents, but the third was illiterate. Of the two who had only half-brothers, one elderly respondent was from a very elite family and the other from a middle class military family; both had high school education. Though this constitutes a small proportion of respondents (9.8%), it does reflect the general pattern in society. The very poor and the rich may divorce and remarry without jeopardizing their economic position. Such is not the case for the middle class, however, as they do not have the family resources necessary to maintain their socio-economic position in the face of such financial stresses imposed by divorce. They may lose their opportunity for educational and occupational achievement and might even face downward mobility. Indeed, younger siblings amongst such middle class families whose parents are divorced generally are not achieving the same level of educational achievement as their older siblings. This is more true now than in the past because of the deteriorating economic conditions, particularly since the structural adjustment program was imposed on Egypt by the I.M.F. and World Bank. It is these factors which are responsible for this reversal in the pattern established since the 1950's of each generation achieving more education and greater social mobility. It is clear that a number of demographic factors, education and social class of mothers, and family structure are important influences on access to education and educational achievement of respondents. What is most surprising, however, is the fact that respondents explained that neither the content nor pedagogy of education challenged their conceptualization of gender. In fact, it was the opposite: education *per se* was very gendered and even sex-segregated. Rather, respondents explained that it was the opportunity to be away from their families, relatives, and friends, so that their interaction with people from other classes, social groups, regions, and countries could occur in a more open context. This provided the opportunity to be exposed to different views and experiences as well as to experiment with different ideas and behavior in a reasonably safe environment.

A2. Depiction of Women in Billboards: Educated or Uneducated?

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, respondents wanted to express their views about ordinary women. They wanted to counter the overwhelmingly negative image of women projected by billboards. They wanted to share their ideas about how Egyptian women are in everyday life. Because of the salience of education in determining an individual's opportunities in Egyptian society, respondents expressed their strong support for education, particularly for women, and they discussed their own efforts to obtain an education for themselves and their children, as discussed above.

Thus, in addition to noticing the body, attire, adornment, and character of the women depicted in billboard ads, the respondents virtually all focussed on determining whether the women projected in these billboard ads were educated. This reflected the Egyptian norm of **literacy** being highly prized. Unfortunately, even regarding education, the billboards depicted primarily uneducated women. Thus, in their spontaneous reactions to the billboard images of women, most of the respondents commented at length about the importance of education. It also became very clear that respondents linked education with character, that an uneducated woman was much more likely to be an "evil" woman. The following comment captures respondents' views about the necessity of education to raise one's status, class, and life-chances:

> I hate this one [on the left]. Women like [in] this picture...[are] very weak, and her health is poor and her children are very sick, also, and [she doesn't have] not clean clothes. [She] don't have clean clothes and her husband like, *yānī*, know nothing about anything. Her baby [is] crying and she can't do anything at all for her children as seen in the picture in all things. But it is not normal in Egypt. I think our women began to understand her situation and already began to determine what she want. And there is another things make her don't to do this many children to get many children. The life itself, it is very difficult and her education is high; and she want her children to be educated in schools and to realize this hope, she want one or two children only, not five like here. If she want five children, she know well that that he can spend about, she realize her situation exactly if she put or not spend over them on education, on food, or on entertainment...[T]he situation is changing now because mass media gave them information about family and the demands upon them to get good education and good food and many, many things in life itself, also...[I]f she [is] not poor, she can have many children, but maybe it is not the case, but sometimes we can find a lot of children and family rich...Yes, it is possible, but not necessary [to have such large families and be so miserable like this picture]. Like this [picture], but in most cases, children go to the school, not go to the field. And the father also maybe work in official job, in agriculture, but not necessary in agriculture. (Respondent #14)

Negative sentiment about uneducated people remains very strong today. The fact that many of the women depicted in billboard ads were illiterate or poorly educated elicited a flood of comments from respondents about the link between low education, low status, low class, and even "evil" character. Furthermore, the hostility felt by middle and upper class Egyptians towards those in lower classes is also obvious in the following comments which typify most respondents' reactions to the depiction of uneducated women in billboard ads:

> I don't want to look at this picture. Fīfī ʻAbdū is not good here. She is naked. Nobody wears such a dress in Egypt, nobody. Even *baladī* women are more decent than this...She is from a poor family, and I heard that she ran away from home when she was very little. (Respondent #5 for photo #32) Fīfī ʻAbdū is a belly dancer. She makes much money at weddings. She is popular for this, but I hate it. She is illiterate...She is supposed to be a big star now, but I don't like her. She is immoral, from low class, and very uneducated. (For photo #34)

> Fīfī ʻAbdū is a vulgar, low class dancer who is illiterate! She can't even write her name. This is an example of what I told you, about the villagization of Cairo. Peasants come into the cities, particularly Cairo, because of the poverty in the countryside and the hope that they can make more money. It is very common for such poor girls to become belly dancers and even to marry rich Arabs, especially if they are beautiful...She is good looking, but vulgar. Men like to watch her dance, especially these low class workers -- plumbers and carpenters. They like such vulgar things because they have no education and no culture. This villagization of Cairo has a very bad effect on us all. We have to put up with these peasants who clutter up the streets and make everything so crowded and dirty and even now we are so worried about crime. It is not so safe anymore. Murders are going up and so are robberies when you are not home. I dislike it [the ad]. It is vulgar. She is naked. Even *baladī* women, they are not vulgar and naked like this...[Here,] [m]aybe she is the owner of a *shīshah* shop...This is not allowed, especially for women!...I think this movie would be such, about immoral and maybe illegal things. (Respondent #19 for photo #32)

> I don't like Fīfī ʻAbdū at all, either. She is very famous dancer, but she has no education. She's illiterate. Maybe she doesn't have time or doesn't need to learn how to read and write. She speaks English well, though. She travels a lot. She went to Hollywood for the Oscars. She's very, very rich. She has many millions. I think she can act, but not very well. I don't like this picture at all...Egyptians do not approve of women smoking *shīshah*. (Respondent #34 for photo #32)

Even those illiterate respondents at the bottom of the class hierarchy expressed negative sentiments about the uneducated. The first comment is from a *Saʻīdī* woman and the second from an elderly bedouin woman whose land was engulfed by an expanding Cairo.

> Whenever I get into discussion with my mother, we disagree, and I always tell my mother that we should leave people alone to do as they like. It shouldn't bother us. I got this attitude after I came to Cairo and saw that people are different, especially educated people. This opened my mind to differences. Now, I argue with my mother. One of my sisters married a teacher and he explains things to her and is opening her mind. She is changing her ideas, but my younger sisters haven't changed at all. They are still young and at home...On our farm, we grow corn, sesame seeds, peanuts, sugar cane, apricots, tangerines, dates, and other crops. We also have cows, *gāmūsah* (water buffalo), sheep, goats, chickens, pigeons, geese, and ducks. We don't have to buy much to live in Minyā because we grow almost everything we need. We don't sell much; we eat it all. If we stay like this, nothing will change. I don't want to be ignorant like my mother and younger sisters. I am glad I came to Cairo. I can change my life and my daughters can be educated. That is better. (Respondent #31)

> My husband was away a lot. After only one year, he abandoned me to marry another woman. After a few years, I never saw him again, though he left me with six children. As an illiterate woman unfamiliar with city life, it was very difficult. I am very bitter about the bad behavior of men. I did my duty as a wife and mother, yet I don't even know if my husband is dead or

> alive. I still live in one room and have to sell small things to buy food. I am very sorry that my children dropped out of primary school and all are illiterate like me, but in those days, the system did not encourage education for the poor. It is no life for us. We must be educated. I am very vigilant to make sure that my grandchildren take school seriously and learn from our lives so that they improve their future through education. I am very upset with some of my children because they had more than two children. This will keep them poor and decrease the chances of my grandchildren becoming educated. One of my daughters-in-law is unbelievably ignorant. She had six children because the first five were boys and she wanted a girl! None of them are properly educated and so the entire family remains illiterate with no chance for a better life. It is all the fault of this woman's ignorance. She isn't smart like me. She did not learn from her own bad experiences as an illiterate woman. (Respondent #30)

In contrast, the fact that the belly dancer, Dīna, is university-educated, makes her more respectable and more acceptable to many respondents, as discussed in Chapter Six, and illustrated by the following comment:

> Ah, yes, this is Dīna, the dancer. She is a belly dancer, but unlike the others, this one is educated. She is called "The University Dancer". In Egypt, belly dancers come from the lower classes; they are usually uneducated. Dancing is a way for them to get rich. This one is also different from the others because she is not fat...Her hair is not attractive [but] it is not obscene like many of these [other] pictures. (Respondent #3)

Despite this high regard for education and that fact that 68.6% of respondents had higher education, it is interesting to note that only one respondent recognized that the flag depicted in the ad (photo #15) for the historical play, "*Khadīwī*," was, in fact, the wrong flag. As a seventy year old woman with only some preparatory schooling, she was astonished when I told her that none of the school teachers and principals, indeed, none of the highly-educated, professional women whom I had interviewed had recognized this fact. She was duly proud that she could contribute something to my study. In this case, life experience proved more useful than formal education.

> Also, the flag of the *khadīwī* was green and it had three stars on it, so they don't have the right flag here. They must change this flag. (Respondent #45 for photo #15)

B. Language: Caliber of Arabic

An important marker of education is the caliber of Arabic spoken and written. In Egypt, command of classical Arabic (*fuṣḥā*) is a clear indication of high class and elite education.[8] In reality, however, few Egyptians can make this claim. There are several dialects of colloquial Egyptian Arabic which differ regionally as well as by class. The caliber of Arabic spoken is integral to a person's identity as an Egyptian and is crucial in determining how other Egyptians will relate to her/him. During the interviewing process, most respondents raised the issue of language, linking it to region, class, status, education, and identity as Egyptians.

B1. Caliber of Arabic Used in Billboards

Most of the billboard ads were not written in classical Arabic, but the one (photos #15 & #16) exception was for the historical play, “*Khadīwī*’. The flood of comments made by respondents about this ad indicate the importance of the caliber of Arabic to identity and social distinctions amongst Egyptians. Some respondents said that because this play was performed in classical Arabic, it was only for the well-educated elite. These respondents were themselves well-educated, upper-middle class, and politically sophisticated, as indicated in this comment:

> It is definitely *Khadīwī* ’Ismā‘īl. We often compare him to ’Anwār Sadāt that *Khadīwī* ’Ismā‘īl used to spend so much money on appearances. He was responsible for the first Egyptian debt crisis. He wanted to turn Cairo into a more beautiful capital than any in Europe. He also brought in a lot of foreigners and foreign investors. Sadāt did the same thing. I think my grandmother has seen this play. They hint at contemporary issues in this play. It is somewhat critical, very critical of this sort of thing. First of all, the play is in a very elaborate, sophisticated language. My grandmother did not know how the actors could memorize all this poetry-form language, in classical Arabic. This appeals to a certain audience. Not everyone can understand this language. It is aimed at the very educated, very cultured people. There were real Russian girls doing ballet in this play. They even made fun of some politicians, both Arab and Western, showing huge heads of them on the stage. I wondered how they could say these critical things. Even the Sa‘ad and Rayān bankruptcies were criticized. I think this is a play about Egypt. Even in the ads, they always say on t.v. that this is a return to good days and good theatre in Egypt. This is really high quality entertainment...They are the most outstanding actors in Egypt today. (Respondent #26)

> You know, my husband comes from a very old family with a great history. He might be interested in such a story...It would not be something to appeal to young people, anyway. I think people my age or even older would be more interested to see this story. (Respondent #32)

The following comments are typical of many respondents who would not go to this play because it was too expensive, the subject matter appeals only to older and elite Egyptians, and they would not understand the classical Arabic:

> This is a play at a government theatre. It is more high class, probably in more classical Arabic, too. I don’t think you will find workers attending this...I don’t think the government will make much money with this play. It is at a rather famous theatre, but the people with money won’t attend this theatre. (She meant that the people who have money now are lower-middle class and they prefer to go to more contemporary entertainment in vernacular Cairo dialect.) (Respondent #3)

> It is expensive. Also, I think this play will be in more correct language, classical Arabic, not the Egyptian dialect. Maybe the older, educated Egyptians will like this more. It is for cultured people, not the workers. (Respondent #16)

> I am not interested in this very old stories. Also, I think they will speak in a very classical way in this play. It is too much for me, *yānī*, to listen to this complicated language and old-fashioned things. I am more interested in modern stories, interesting stories, *yānī*. Everybody

> knows this story, about the old times of *khadīwī*. We learn these things in school. Maybe this is not a good story. This was a dark time in our history, I think. This is how we got into the hands of Europeans, *yānī*, because these *khadīwīs* they gave our country away to them! Anyway, I am not so interested in politics. (Respondent #37)

C. Education, Language, and Class: Conclusion

Most respondents also decried the high income of entertainers in Egypt, particularly those who have very little education. These respondents believed that in the past, acting, singing, and dancing were professions requiring skill and talent, even if they are generally low class occupations. They also believed that many famous actors, particularly in the past, were university-educated. Today, however, almost all the respondents believed that many women with little, if any, education, skill, or talent were dominating the entertainment industry. Respondents believed that these entertainers were being promoted as sex objects to entice men to spend a lot of money. The price of most plays has become prohibitive, as have movies in "respectable" cinemas. As discussed in Chapter Six, even though dancers and many singers have little, if any, education, they are very wealthy and receive a great deal of publicity in the mass media. Respondents believed that this was corrupting the values of young people, particularly by eroding the value of education. Furthermore, they were furious that uneducated people were becoming much richer than the well educated upper-middle class. They also objected to the economic and political influence that this new class of uneducated *nouveau riche* exerted in Egypt as well as their attempt to claim higher social status. This is a rather serious concern because this change in the class structure is having significant impact on Egyptian society. Most respondents found this completely ridiculous and morally objectionable, as indicated in the following comments:

> She [Fīfī 'Abdū] looks like the *nouveau riche*, someone who got rich fast and wants to look like she's really in another class than where she belongs. She looks uncomfortable in these clothes. She looks like a poor woman who got rich and is trying to look like she is from the middle or upper class. No one could believe her, though. She looks like a *baladī* woman. (Respondent #28 for photo #34)

> Fīfī 'Abdū is a belly dancer...[I]f you ever saw her dance, *yānī*, you would see [that] she is *mughrimah* [a criminal], *yānī*, vulgar, indecent...[Men] are crazy about her...[S]he is on the hit list for belly dancers in weddings and engagements...
>
> ...Some people say she is illiterate; she doesn't even know how to sign, *yānī*. I have heard a lot of stories about her...She is very provocative. Fīfī 'Abdū talked [on t.v.] about how she ran away from home when she was young, and uh, said, "No, I wouldn't like my daughters to do things like this." The expressions she was using I have never heard before in my life. She was saying that the people she deals with in her environment of acting and belly dancing, the climate is like in a jungle. She was actually saying, "'*Akhaburru*" -- "I would devour someone like an animal if someone did something to me," she said. I don't know if it is slang or what, but I didn't even understand some of her expressions. I am sure they are very *baladī*. She cried when Mona [Hussayni -- t.v. host] asked her if she wanted her daughters to become belly dancers or to escape from home. My friend told me that she is married to a Palestinian businessman and she has her accounts in banks where my friend works and she signs with thumb print because she doesn't even know how to sign...

The thing I dislike about Fīfī 'Abdū and people like her is that she acts in a way and does things which we have been taught are wrong to be successful and accepted, and yet, she is very successful and accepted! For instance, she gets invited to important occasions by rich and powerful people and she is rich and can afford to send her children to the best schools, even better than people in the middle class who are very hard-working and do everything they were taught was correct. What struck me most and makes me most upset is that her "success" *yānī*, is the type of success which goes against all our values and what we were brought up with in terms of moral standards. Our parents probably always wanted us to have a good career, to be educated, and to be successful. She got everything and made a lot of money, but I don't consider this success. I wouldn't like to be in this type of career. She managed to get so much power and connections and money and wealth just through dancing. A lot of people I know have to work like hell and never reach similar standards like hers with a decent education.

(Do you think her career is indecent?) It's not for me to judge. I don't care, but if you take it from the point of view of society, it would not be decent in the traditional way, in terms of traditional values. This wouldn't be decent in Egypt. It's very strange now to be successful and have access to everything here -- linked to power and ministers and business people, etc., -- I even heard of belly dancers who even opened private schools as an investment after they got rich, as a business.

(Is this good or bad from your point of view?) It's strange if I send my kids to school owned by a belly dancer. I know she would not be a teacher or teach my children, but it's strange. I dislike education being a business. (But aren't all private schools businesses?) They are. (Then what difference does it make who owns it?) A man who owns a school got rich owning a businesses for stuffing furniture and making mattresses -- "Tākī". Suzanne Mubārak was opening the school [*Madrassah Taqaiullah*]...There was a six minute item on the news about the opening of his school. If everyone is opening private schools, then why not belly dancers? My dislike is [the] unconscious link with the immorality of belly dancing. I wouldn't like to attend such a school or to send my children there. Logically, it doesn't make sense, but this is because of how I was raised. It's probably a prejudice, I know, but this is how I react.

At home, we focus on other values. They focus on proper behavior and that education is everything. My parents used to tell me that we want to see you as a successful person. They never told me they want to see me married, like most parents. They always wanted me to be independent and rely on myself and have a degree. These belly dancers are uneducated. Even if they are literate, they do not have academic educations, and certainly not university degrees. These dancers have to support their families; and because they are uneducated, they can only dance, so why not dancing? It pays well, but it is not considered respectable. (So do you believe that a career which demands a university degree as a prerequisite is more decent and respectable than one which does not?) Any work deserves respect, whatever work you do. We can't all graduate from university and do intellectual work. There are people who have to do manual work as well, so I don't think that street sweepers, for instance, should not be respected because they do this kind of job, but I think that in this society, there is a lot of emphasis on degrees. At least one of your children has to get a degree. It takes a long time to do that and the other children may have to work to support that one. But at least one in a family has to be educated to get a decent job. It is true that the status of the job goes up with the amount of education required for it. Everyone in Egypt is a doctor or an engineer, *yānī* They all want to be doctors or engineers. They make such a big fuss about it. So, in fact, even with Ph.D. education, there is some kind of status differences. Not only that, people with Ph.D.'s often are not even decent. It's very complicated. It's like in a lot of things, people tend to look more on the outer appearance: Where do you live? Do you have a car? Do you own a house? What job do you have? Are you an engineer or a doctor? This is the sort of thing that strikes you first and forms your

> idea about a person, unfortunately. And even if you have a son or daughter who wants to get married, these are the things you want to know about any prospective marriage partner. You would not consider someone who does not have a flat and a car and a decent job. (Even though belly dancers make a lot of money, would it still be considered an indecent job and would they be considered unacceptable as marriage partners?) Yes. Even though people like watching belly dancers, and even have them at their parties, they would not agree to have one as a daughter-in-law, no matter how rich. (Respondent #26 for photo #32)

Ironically, because of the mass migration of Egyptian workers to the Arab Gulf countries during the 1970's and 1980's, many poorly-educated Egyptians were able to save enough money to pay for extra tutoring required to keep their children in school, and some even sent their children to better Egyptian private schools. Many skilled workers sent their children to the American University in Cairo, particularly if they did not qualify academically to get into the Egyptian universities.

This phenomenon of lower and lower-middle class Egyptians amassing wealth and sending their children to private schools has upset the traditional status and class norms, something akin to the rise of the *bourgeois* class in Europe. Thus, some Egyptians with high school education own a Mercedes car, their own condominium, and have expensive imported consumer goods and luxury items. Many have become *petit bourgeois*, particularly in the construction, import-export, agricultural, and tourist industries. Still, they speak a low caliber vernacular Arabic, live a very low class life-style, and exhibit very vulgar behavior by elite standards. Thus, as during the early transition to modern capitalism in Europe, they are mocked by the elites today as they were by Molière (1670) in his musical comedy, *Le Bourgeois gentilhomme* (The Would-Be Gentleman). Even the imitation of lower-middle and middle class women by *baladī* women, particularly when they travel outside their own neighborhood or community, has become much more common than in the past. Respondents recognized some of these trends in some of the images of women in billboard ads. Most of the respondents complained that these trends are not acceptable because they are not based on Islamic values and reflect the most negative aspects of capitalism. Most respondents rejected the emphasis on wealth over character and morality as wrong, and many believed it was due to Western influence. The following comments typify respondents' reactions to some of the billboard ads in this regard:

> She [Fīfī 'Abdū] looks like a *baladī* woman who is pretending to be rich. Maybe she got rich once and then spent all her money. This is what usually happens when they get rich. (Respondent #31 for photo #34)

> You see [Fīfī 'Abdū], she is not only from down in the low level of society, she could be trying to look like from the high stuff and go to five star hotels here. She wants to look like aristocrat, but she is *baladī*. (Respondent #47 for photo #34)

> She [Fīfī 'Abdū] is a very proud woman...Here, she looks like a woman who wants to be modern. No one could believe that she is rich or from a high class. She try to make herself look rich, but she can't because she is *baladī*. (Respondent #48 for photo #34)

Thus, the aspirations and behavior of the respondents themselves -- sending their children to school and encouraging them to improve their command of written Arabic and achieve a higher caliber vernacular, as well as learn a European language -- reflected the Egyptian desire to gain as much education as possible in order to improve their social status and class position. Command of classical Arabic, written and oral, is central to an Islamic and/or Arab identity, whereas traditionally it has not been as important to middle class Egyptians who prefer a Mediterranean-Hellenic identity. In fact, the respondents encouraged their children to achieve an even higher educational level than they had. This importance placed on high educational achievement is directly linked to how Egyptians evaluate the social status and class individuals. In general, high educational achievement is linked to high social status and high class status.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, high educational achievement is also linked to character, whether the woman has gender-appropriate personality traits, behavior patterns, and social roles. A well-educated woman is more likely to be viewed as a "good" woman than as an "evil" woman. These beliefs were reflected in the comments respondents made about the images of women in billboard ads. When viewing these images, respondents complained bitterly that not only were most of the women depicted as uneducated, but that their lack of education was indicative of being low class and being an "evil" woman. "Evil" women were entertainers -- actors, singers, dancers -- and /or prostitutes. Thus, respondents believed that besides being uneducated, most of the women depicted in the billboard ads were, in fact, not only entertainers, but prostitutes. They complained bitterly that most of the billboard ads did not depict images of the idealized beauty, the "good" woman, and even less the "ordinary" women.

Respondents' comments about women portrayed in billboard ads as well as their own behavior clearly illustrate the importance of education for Egyptian women as well as how the increased educational achievement of Egyptian women has resulted in substantial changes in their lives as individuals as well as societal change. Respondents' views about education and language serve as a bridge between all the factors linked to gender identity which have been discussed so far in this chapter as well as in Chapters Four, Five, and Six and respondents' views about what constitute gender-appropriate social roles for ordinary Egyptian women.

III. Women's Roles: Ideal Versus Real

After focussing on the physical aspects of beauty, appropriate attire, the idealized versus demonized personality traits and behavior for women, the demonized social roles of women, and the inaccurate representation of even ordinary women, the respondents began to discuss gender-appropriate social roles for women. As discussed in Chapter Six, respondents began the discussion of women's social roles by decrying the fact that women are demonized in most billboard ads, overwhelmingly portrayed as the "evil" woman. Even the ads which purported to depict "ordinary" women were found to be highly problematic and unrepresentative of Egyptian or even Cairene women, as discussed above. Thus, by the time respondents had finished commenting on the images of women in billboard ads, most were eager to turn their attention to discuss the "proper" roles of women in everyday life.

With some respondents, this discussion arose spontaneously, but the questions constituting the third part of the interview schedule provided a basis for me to ensure that the ideas of all respondents about women's roles were recorded. Therefore, using the third part of the interview schedule, respondents who had not already addressed these aspects of gender were asked a number of standardized questions intended to reveal the women's ideas about the prescribed and ideal gender roles for women in Egypt as well as to discern any deviation in their own practice. Because this subject was very important to the respondents, most of them did not just answer the specific questions, but spoke very spontaneously about these issues. Nevertheless, the respondents' answers were grouped according to the following themes: women's domestic roles as primary feminine gender roles; women's rights in the family; women's right to participate in civil society; women's right to choose their own social roles; women's employment; the consequences of women's employment on domestic gender roles, the importance of education, sources of influence on respondents' gender identity and gender roles, and the similarity and differences in gender identity and gender roles between respondents and their mothers. Throughout the interviewing process, virtually all the respondents concurred that the most important and the most positive roles for women are those of mother, wife, and housewife, and that the worst, most negative roles were those of entertainers, particularly belly dancer and prostitute.

A. Women's Domestic Roles: The Primary Feminine Gender Roles

Respondents identified women's **primary** gender roles and responsibilities within the family and society as: daughter, wife, mother, and housewife. They believed that these roles are central to the gender identity of all women in Egypt, and that any other aspects of identity and any other roles are secondary.

The role of daughter was, of course, experienced by all respondents. This role did not seem to constitute a focus of concern for most of the respondents. One respondent whose father divorced her mother and remarried grew up feeling rejected by her father, whom she saw very seldom. However, for most respondents, as with most Egyptian women, this role is perhaps the shortest and least problematic one. Daughters are expected to obey their parents, particularly their fathers, who retain complete authority over them until they marry. For most Egyptian girls, agricultural field work or other subsistence economic activities constitute the bulk of life until marriage, which usually occurs at puberty or during adolescence. For the privileged minority of girls who are able to attend school, marriage is usually postponed until schooling is completed, even at the post-secondary level, though even these girls are still often engaged during adolescence.

Whether a daughter chooses to remain single or marries, her father has ultimate control over her fate. As allowed in Islam, fathers can marry off their daughters without the daughter's permission. Furthermore, daughters can not marry, particularly for the first time, without their father's consent, regardless of the daughter's age. Thus, fathers have the right to kill daughters who disobey them, and do so even today, particularly if the daughter's action is believed to damage her family's honor. Marrying without the father's consent has resulted in the death of many such unfortunate daughters in Egypt (CBC, 1996; Daniszewski, 1997; UPI, 1997).

The role of wife was identified by respondents as an important primary gender role. In Egypt, it is expected that all adults will marry and have children. Women are expected to marry at a much younger age than men. Furthermore, wives are expected to keep their husbands happy, maintain the household, and remain at home, particularly if they have children. Nevertheless, nearly all the respondents believed that women should not be confined to nor identified primarily by the role of wife. It was clear that most of them viewed this role as only one among other important roles for women. Education, however, was salient, since all the women with no higher education believed that the role of wife was primary, even though some of them acknowledged the unfortunate necessity of women's employment today. In contrast, the more educated women viewed the role of wife as far less central, giving much greater importance to employment for women. Interestingly, social class did not appear to be a salient factor in these attitudes.

Respondents gave very similar answers about the role of mother as for the previous query about the role of wife. Again, respondents overwhelmingly believed that the role of mother is not the only primary role for women. They believed that women should not be confined to nor identified only by their role as mother. Nevertheless, most respondents wanted to be mothers, whether they had children or not at the time of the interviews. They also believed that motherhood conferred high status on a woman, particularly if she had sons. Only one woman complained about having many sons before she had a daughter! Still, an unhappy marriage or fear of becoming trapped in an unhappy marriage was a concern expressed by a number of respondents regardless of education, and this influenced both their beliefs about gender and their behavior. For instance, it meant that several respondents doubted they would ever marry, which would also exclude them from the possibility of becoming mothers. While none of the respondents with higher education believed that woman's main primary role is that of mother, 50% of those with less education agreed with this traditional belief. Here, it is apparent that a much greater proportion of respondents with at least some higher education did not believe that a woman's primary role is that of mother. Again, social class did not appear to be a salient factor in these attitudes.

Housework is entirely the responsibility of women in Egypt. All domestic labor was done by the respondents themselves and/or by their servants. Because of extreme class differences, most Egyptian women either work as domestic servants or have female relatives who do so. The small percentage of women who are middle class generally employ one or more servants to do a variety of domestic chores; however, they also do some domestic chores themselves, either because they cannot afford to employ servants for all their domestic labor or because they prefer to do some of this work themselves. Only a small, privileged minority of elite Egyptian women are able to delegate all domestic labor to servants. Their task is then one of managing and supervising. All of the respondents agreed that it is the wife's responsibility to make sure that the housework is done, whether by her own labor or by servants. Details of the respondents' attitudes and behavior housework are discussed in the following section.

Because the middle class and elite women were over-represented in this study, 76.5% of the respondents lived in households which employed at least one servant.[9] Most of these women, in fact, employed more than one servant.[10] The link between social class and the employment of servants is evident in the level of household expenditures reported by the respondents. Of the thirty-nine women whose households employed servants, 92.3% spent more than ₤E 1,000 per month. No woman whose household expenditures were less than ₤E 500 per month employed a servant. In Egypt today, there are many middle to high level civil servants with graduate degrees holding important positions who earn far less than this, so the division between white collar professional and blue collar manual work no longer determines economic level *per se*. In other words, social class is not so much dependent upon earned income as it is based on inherited wealth and family name. Egyptians whose income was entirely earned in the public sector were unable to employ servants because of their extremely low wages. Egyptians working in the private sector for foreign companies could earn enough money to live a *bourgeois* lifestyle, including hiring servants. Any Egyptian family which spent ₤E 1,000 per month on household expenditures would be a very privileged one by any standards ('Amīn, 1995). Nevertheless, regardless of social class, all Egyptian women are responsible for maintaining the household. Housework is very gendered and respondents believed that a woman's character is reflected by the standard of her housework.

B. Women's Rights in the Family

Women's roles as daughter, wife, and mother are conceptualized in both Coptic Christianity and Islam as "natural". Not only are they the most gender-appropriate roles for women, they are obligatory. A woman's social status is largely derived from how well she fulfills the duties associated with these domestic gender roles. Women's rights are also generally linked to these roles. Family law in Egypt is under the jurisdiction of the religious courts, and Islam remains the sole basis for Muslim women's rights within the family. Women, like men, are expected to marry and produce children; however, one major difference between the sexes is that men have authority over women, and so women are expected to obey men. Before marriage, a woman is under the direct control of her father; after marriage, she is under the direct control of her husband; and if divorced or widowed, she is under the direct control of her son, father, or other close male consanguineal kin.

Personal Status Laws in Egypt, which form the basis of family law, have been legislated by the state since 1920, initiating a significant departure from previous practice (Sonbol, 1996a:277). Efforts to liberalize the rights of women in the family through newer legislation in 1979 ultimately failed due to extreme opposition by men (Jenefsky, 1991; al-

Nowaihi, 1979; Sonbol, 1996a). Here, the focus is on the respondents' views about particular aspects of family law in Islam and how they are related to their views about gender. Thus, respondents' views about the status, rights, and roles of ordinary women in Egyptian society became more clear through dialog with them about women's rights in the family.

B1. Marriage

Marriage is a duty for both sexes in Islam, but the sexes have very different rights and responsibilities in marriage. Marriage is a civil contract in Islam, not a sacred rite and not a sacred union as it is in Judaism and Christianity. The contract is between the groom and the bride's male guardian or representative (*wālī*) (al-Hibri, 1997; Sabbah, 1984:35). In Egypt, it is not necessary and not even usual that the bride sign the marriage contract or even be present at the ceremony (*Ibid.*). Marriage is arranged between the elders in the two extended families, not usually the choice of individual partners. The main goal is to strengthen family ties and property. Traditionally, marriage partners are cousins, and in most cases women are not free to marry someone else without the consent of the cousin(s) (Rugh, 1984). While men prefer marriage partners with male kin because they strengthen jural-legal ties (*wāgib* "duty"), women prefer partners with female kin because they will strengthen affective-indulgent ties (*mar ūf*) and lessen the influence of the mother-in-law (*Ibid.*:111). This reflects the mutually exclusive gender roles of men and women in marriage: men are breadwinners; women are nurturers.

The question of women's consent for marriage as a requirement and right of women in Islam as well as securing women's rights in marriage are still serious problems for women and the subject of heated debates in Egypt (Fluehr-Lobban and Bardsley-Sirois, 1990; Walther, 1993:55). Therefore, it was not surprising that respondents in this study were also seriously concerned about these issues. Although Islam provides for marriage against the will of the bride, including children, so long as her parents agree, virtually all of the respondents were against this practice (*Qur'ān*: *Sūrah* IV, Verse 25). Some of the respondents had been married young and against their will despite their rigorous objections. This included respondents from all social classes. In fact, one such respondent from an elite upper-middle class family who had been forced at age sixteen to marry a physician twice her age was still trapped in this unhappy marriage more than twenty years later. She was adamant that her children would not be forced to marry against their will. She was also adamant that her two daughters, unlike her, would be university-educated and able to work outside the household after marriage.

Another aspect of this issue of consent is that of agency within marriage. Thirty-eight (74.5%) respondents were or had been married.[11] Thirteen (25.5%) respondents had never been married, three of whom were engaged at the time of the interviews. Despite the authority of their fathers, however, half of the single respondents had either refused to become engaged or had disastrous experiences with engagements and so followed a very unusual path for Egyptian daughters: four in their thirties and another in her late twenties were unlikely to marry. The other five were under thirty and likely to marry, but only when they found a suitable husband. Some of the respondents refused to marry prospective partners, citing a variety of reasons. They believed that some of the men were incompatible in terms of personality and/or values and some were unsuitable in terms of education and/or social class. Interestingly, some of the respondents had no intention of marrying anyone because they preferred to be under the authority of their fathers than to risk being subordinated to a man whom they did not know or trust. While none of the respondents were homosexual, some of them spoke about the difficulty lesbians face because of the homophobic nature of Egyptian society, particularly for women. Some respondents told their families that they wished to remain at home to devote themselves to the care of their elderly parents. Regardless of their individual reasons for avoiding marriage, they could not voice their real reasons to family members because it would be unacceptable.

In summary, the fact that half of the never-married respondents would probably never marry represents a relatively recent phenomenon not only in Egypt, but world-wide. Increasingly, more women are preferring to remain single than to become trapped in unhappy marriages, particularly for women who have at least high school education. This is a very serious violation of gender for ordinary women in Egypt. Because it is becoming very difficult for men to marry due to the deteriorating economic conditions, this rejection of marriage by an increasing number of Egyptian women may, in fact, not be as obvious as it would have in the past.

In Islam, a wife is required to obey her husband. In fact, the prophet, Muhammad, is reported to have said that the best wife is "[s]he who pleases him when he looks at her, obeys him when he commands, and does not oppose him in things which he rejects for her and for himself" (Walther, 1993:60). Recognizing that husbands have the authority to control their wives' activities, these respondents were unwilling to risk having to give up their freedom, including the freedom to work outside the household. Thus, there was absolutely no support amongst any of the respondents for parents arranging marriages against the will of their children, and very little support for the traditional practice of keeping women secluded inside the household.

Because of the serious housing shortage, particularly in Cairo, and the deteriorating economic situation, most men are unable to provide *Sharī'ah* housing and/or proper maintenance for their wives. Since these are women's rights in marriage, so long as they are obedient to their husbands, many Egyptian women are concerned about this erosion in their rights as wives. It has become increasingly prevalent for women to abandon their husbands for reasons of lack of support, improper housing, and even abuse. It is noteworthy that during the interviewing process, the film, "*'Indhār b'iṭ-ṭā'ah*" ("Dictum/Threat of Order of Obedience") starring the popular actors, Laila 'Alwī and Mahmūd Hamīdah, was creating an uproar in the households of Cairo as well as in the newspapers because it was about a woman who disobeyed her husband, leaving him for another man, and the husband's efforts to obtain a court order for her forcible return (*bayt 'iṭ-ṭā'ah*).

This film was particularly disturbing to Egyptians because it portrayed a married woman living with her lover, not her husband, which is taboo in Islam as well in Coptic Christianity. Many respondents thought that this was the direct outcome of Western influence in Egypt, particularly through the entertainment industry. All the respondents believed that such behavior is immoral and unacceptable in Islam and so should be unheard of in Egypt. Nevertheless, many of the respondents, could sympathize with a woman who was being coercively returned to a husband to whom she had been forcibly wed by her family and whom she did not love. The government has been unsuccessful in its thirty year effort to abolish the custom of forced return of disobedient wives (*bayt 'iṭ-ṭā'ah*), and its continued practice was the subject of heated public debate during my data collection phase of research (Fluehr-Lobban and Bardsley-Sirois, 1990; Sonbol, 1996a). Many respondents complained bitterly that this was a Turkish (Ottoman) custom, and not rooted in Islam. Two professional, upper-middle class respondents made the following comments about the ad for this play (photo #27), which are representative of many respondents' sentiments:

> I didn't see this movie...[but] people doesn't like it. I mean, they criticized it, knocked it. Many of these [newspaper] critics didn't like this movie...[because] it contains many aggressive movements, unsuitable for our country and for our religion. I think it is not successful and the story is not suitable...The critics...were aggressive in their opinion about it. They think that it contains many sexy views and there is no need for these... (#11)

> Here, Laila 'Alwī is depicted like the dancer-whore again. This is a common depiction of women in films here. This particular film created quite a controversy. Newspapers and magazines discussed the story. People argued over whether or not this is a subject for public discussion. Many women are very angry about this law [*bayt 'ittā'ah*], the one requiring women to obey their husbands, even returning home against their will. In Egypt, the husband has such control over the woman so long as he has not divorced her. He can get a court order to force her to obey him and return to his house. (#3)

Whether in Islam or Coptic Christianity, Egyptian women must obey their husbands or risk being beaten, not supported materially, divorced without alimony, or even murdered (*Qur'ān*: *Ṣūrah* 4, Verse 32-34). The only status worse than a disobedient wife (*nāshizah*) is that of prostitute. Disobedient wives are not entitled to the support or protection of their husbands and are a source of dishonor to their parents and kin (Fluehr-Lobban and Bardsley-Sirois, 1990; Walther, 1993:48; 59). Neither religious authorities nor the state challenge these beliefs and practices in Egypt. Thus, although most women marry, they have much to fear regarding marriage, reflected in their increasing insistence on choosing their own marriage partner and even outright resistance to marriage.

B2. Divorce, Custody, and Maintenance Rights

Just as consent for marriage has become a serious concern for Egyptian women, so, too, has consent for divorce. Unlike consent for marriage, however, there was no consensus amongst the respondents regarding the issue of consent for divorce despite the fact that divorce itself continues to be an issue of serious concern for women. Like consent for marriage, consent for divorce is related to the status and rights of women. The fact that many of the marriages and divorces in Egypt are conducted without the voluntary consent of the woman reflects the continued low status of women and the lack of respect for women's rights. The fact that most of the respondents accepted the current Egyptian social norms, which deny Muslim women the opportunity of securing the right to divorce clause in their marriage contract as specified in the *Qur'ān*, is also indicative not only of their lack of knowledge about women's rights in Islam, but also of the powerful hold of patriarchal ideology over both women and men.

Respondents reported that the Coptic Church does not allow divorce. Even separation is nearly impossible. Thus, for Coptic Christians there is never any discussion about divorce. In practice, separation is becoming more common for younger Copts trapped in an unhappy marriage, but like their elders, remarriage is impossible: marriage is for life. For Muslims, however, divorce is not only common but presents a serious problem for women because of their poor economic prospects as divorcées. Divorce is the prerogative of the man, and no grounds are required. While women have the right to ask for inclusion of the right to divorce clause in their marriage contracts, this is seldom practiced in Egypt.[12] The only remaining option for an Egyptian woman who wishes to leave her husband, other than convincing her husband to divorce her, is to request a divorce from the family court. The permitted grounds for this action are very limited, court action is costly and extremely time consuming -- usually decades -- and the male judges are very reluctant to grant divorces to women against the wishes of their husbands.[13] Coptic and Muslim respondents alike pointed out the difficulties women face obtaining a divorce, but they also agreed that the ease with which Muslim men can divorce their wives presents an equally serious problem for women.

Respondents were asked if Muslim women in Egypt should have the right to divorce clause in their marriage contracts. Married respondents were also asked if, in fact, they had such a clause in their own marriage contracts. While none of these women had this clause in her own marriage contract, the respondents' answers about whether women should assert their right to ask for it revealed the ambivalence they felt about this issue. Twenty-six (51%) of the respondents were completely opposed; three were uncertain; six said that it was acceptable only in certain cases or under certain conditions, citing a variety of caveats. Only sixteen (31.4%) respondents unequivocally supported including the right to divorce clause in marriage contracts.

Respondents who said that women should not have the right to divorce explained that Islam explicitly gives only men the right to divorce, a right which is unconditional. They believed that men would use this right wisely and that men are better suited to determine the future of the marriage. Furthermore, they believed that this wisdom is rooted in biology, that men are more rational and logical than women, that women are emotional and "irrational" and would misuse the right to divorce. For them, divorce is a "natural" prerogative of gender for men and "unnatural" for the gender of women. Not surprisingly, 68.8% of the respondents with no higher education gave this response, compared to only 31.4% of those with higher education. Interestingly, the three young, engaged respondents and the married lawyer were amongst those well-educated respondents who held this conservative, essentialist view of gender which denies women the right to initiate divorce. Those who were uncertain about a woman's right to ask for the divorce clause in the marriage contract explained that if this is acceptable in Islam, they would not object to it, but they were not sure that this was, indeed, the case.

Those supporting the inclusion of the right to divorce clause in the marriage contract included a minority of those with higher education and only three with high education. Furthermore, these three constituted the minority opinion amongst the nine high school-educated. One was the youngest respondent, one had several failed engagements, and the third was trapped in a very unhappy marriage. One of the well educated women supporting this position was an unmarried lawyer. Thus, they had compelling personal reasons to want the right to divorce compared to their more happily married and/or more elderly counterparts.

The respondents who cited caveats gave the greatest insight into the dilemmas facing women regarding divorce. Two said that ideally, all women should have the right to divorce clause included in their marriage contracts, but that this would never be accepted by Egyptian men, so it is not really a possibility. These two women were single and had graduate degrees. Indeed, one of the main reasons that they remained single was their fear of being trapped in an unhappy marriage. On the other hand, three respondents said that the right to divorce clause should only be included in the marriage contract of "certain people under certain conditions", but certainly not for most people. They believed that the right to include the right to divorce clause in the marriage contract was provided by Islam to protect women who had been or have reason to believe that they will be abused by their husbands: if a woman had been divorced before and/or if her husband had been married previously and/or had another wife and/or if the bride had reason to doubt her husband's character, the bride could ask for this clause to protect herself because she is more likely to be abused in these instances. One of these women was quite elderly and had only preparatory schooling, while the other was a highly educated medical professional who believed that she was very knowledgeable about Islam. Finally, one respondent believed that the rules for men and women should be the same, even in divorce; however, she seemed to contradict herself by stating that the right to divorce clause should only be included in the marriage contract in very special circumstances. This woman was a school social worker and, like the other respondent, saw herself as very knowledgeable about Islam.

An interesting pattern of interaction amongst several variables emerged from these data. Characteristics of respondents favoring inclusion of the right to divorce clause in the marriage contract included: having some higher education, being over the age of forty, fearing/being trapped in an unhappy marriage, and having been divorced. Even though the majority of respondents did not approve of the right to divorce clause in the marriage contract, there was a significantly greater percentage of women with no higher education holding this position, indicating a more liberating effect of post-secondary education on women's views towards inclusion of the right to divorce clause in the marriage contract.

Interestingly, social class was not a salient variable.[14]

At the time of the interviews, there was an organized lobbying effort by some elite women, including lawyers and university professors, for the state to establish a standard marriage contract which would include, amongst other legal protections for women, the right to divorce clause. In fact, some women's groups were even lobbying the state to pass secular legislation ensuring legal guarantees for equal rights for women and men, including the same right to divorce as men. This organization, The Communication Group for the Enhancement of the Status of Women in Egypt, believed that new legislation was required to guarantee Egyptian women their civil and human rights. I showed one of their publications, which contained their proposed standardized marriage contract with the right to divorce clause included, to many of the respondents, but very few of them had ever heard of this organization or their lobbying. Furthermore, they were quite puzzled about this initiative. To most of them, it seemed too confrontational to be gender-appropriate for Egyptian women.

Most of the respondents were not aware of these efforts, but when asked if they would support a secular law granting men and women equal rights to divorce, there was significantly less support for this than there was for the voluntary inclusion of the right to divorce clause in the marriage contract as allowed under Islam. Because the status and rights of Muslim women are governed by religious law, *Sharīʿah* for Muslims, in family courts, decisions cannot be over-ruled by secular laws. Thus, it was not surprising that while 51% of respondents had opposed inclusion of the right to divorce clause in the marriage contract, 68.6% opposed a secular law guaranteeing women this right by making it a mandatory part of every marriage contract. They believed that it was impossible in Islam to legislate secular laws governing women's rights.[15] There was also an increase in the number of respondents who said they were uncertain about the legitimacy in Islam of such a secular law. Most notably, this included respondents who supported inclusion of the right to divorce clause in the marriage contract as specified in Islam.[16] Clearly, these respondents were less willing to support such a secular law if it violated the principles of Islam. Likewise, they were unwilling to support the proposed law if it made women more vulnerable to men's wrath.

Only twelve (23.5%) respondents were willing to support a secular law guaranteeing women the same right to divorce as men, at least ideally. Seven of the respondents gave unconditional support for it, while four said it was a good idea but would be too difficult to do in Egypt; and one respondent who was a lawyer supported the idea personally but said it was simply impossible in Islam to do this. All of the respondents who believed that men and women should have the same legal right to divorce, supported by government legislation, held a position which would be considered extremely radical and probably unIslamic in Egyptian society.

With such overwhelming opposition by respondents as well as Egyptians in general to a secular law guaranteeing all women the same right to divorce as men, it is obvious that this would violate Egyptian social norms at this time (Hatem, 1986a; Hussein, 1985; al-Nowaihi, 1979). In fact, most respondents reacted in horror at the suggestion when they were first asked, and very few of them were aware of demands by some women's groups for such legislation. What factors might account for the dissenting voices? As with the previous question, age, fear of being trapped or actually being trapped in an unhappy marriage, having been divorced, and education were all salient factors.[17]

While it is true that all of the respondents who supported this proposed secular legislation could be characterized as "modern" or even "Westernized", others who were even more liberal opposed such legislation, mostly because they believed that Egyptian society was not ready for it and it would cause a severe backlash which would ultimately be worse for women than the *status quo*. Overall, three factors seem to provide an underlying rationale for the division between respondents who supported this legislation and those who did not: 1) the happiness of the marriage, 2) economic security, and 3) (literal or liberal) interpretation of Islam. Differences in the combination of these factors seem to explain why religiously conservative women would support the law while women with very liberal interpretations of Islam did not.

Respondents were asked if they believed that custody (*ḥiḍānah*) of children (including financial support) should be awarded in accordance with Islam. In Egypt, this generally means that mothers have custody of daughters until they are twelve years old and sons until they are nine, after which time the father gains custody.[18] Every respondent agreed, but they also recognized that while this is the right of women in Islam, it is difficult for women to secure this right in Egypt. Men have often been able to take custody of young children from their mothers because the courts have allowed them to cite spurious reasons and/or because women have been unable to initiate or maintain court action against their husbands.[19] Thus, most women were very sensitive to this issue. The respondents believed that the religious courts should be reformed to more accurately reflect the legitimate rights of women and children in Islam. Interestingly, the respondents were in favor of the government taking the initiative in such reform, so long as it was within *Sharī'ah*.

The right of a wife to housing and maintenance (*nafaqah*) by the husband which is at the same status level as that of the husband is guaranteed for women in Islam so long as the wife is obedient to her husband.[20] Once divorced, those rights are temporary, at best, as specified in the *Qur'ān*. The extension of the neo-patriarchal Egyptian state into aspects of family law that are part of *Sharī'ah* which occurred during the Sadāt regime unleashed a vicious backlash against women in general and the assertion of women's rights in particular (Jenefsky, 1991; Sonbol, 1996). Protection of women's rights to housing and maintenance after divorce as well as during marriage were central to the 1979 reform of the Personal Status Laws (*Ibid.*).

Memories of this backlash to the 1979 reform of the Personal Status Laws were still fresh in the minds of most respondents. They were all too aware of the public display of wrath by angry men. Even those few respondents too young to recall the actual events remember them because they have been the subject of emotional family discussions years later. Because of men's hostile reaction, the reality of serious housing shortages, and men's decreasing ability to be good breadwinners, most of the respondents did not support secular legislation guaranteeing women the right to housing and maintenance after divorce. A few respondents knew of well-educated, wealthy divorced women who lived independently of their kin in their own apartments, but reported that they had been harassed so severely by men that they were forced to return to live with their fathers. Two widowed respondents did live alone, but they were over seventy as well as economically independent.

Virtually all the respondents agreed that it was becoming more difficult to get married as well as more difficult for a divorced woman to live independently in the marital home because of the deteriorating economic climate in Egypt; however, they believed that building more public sector housing, raising salaries and creating more jobs would be more effective and more socially acceptable government initiatives than the 1979 reforms to the Personal Status Laws. Furthermore, the idea of a woman living without a man is so alien to Egyptian culture that it was not acceptable to the majority of respondents who believed that every woman must live with a male guardian, whether her father, brother, husband, son, or some other consanguineal male relative.

While all of the respondents recognized the erosion of these rights as a serious problem, there was disagreement about whether women should insist on their rights. Many acknowledged that couples are having to postpone marriage for several years in order to secure a proper household. Indeed, this was the case for all three of the engaged respondents, despite their status as middle and upper-middle class professionals; two planned to work in the Arab Gulf countries immediately after marriage in order to secure adequate resources to maintain a lifestyle commensurate with their social class.

Not surprisingly, respondents recognized that it was almost impossible for the majority of Egyptian women to demand the right of *Sharīʿah* and proper maintenance as wives. Only one of the four married respondents with less than high school education was properly housed and maintained by her husband. The other three lived in one room which was provided by their employers and was attached to their employers' residences. Three other respondents who had less than high school education were widows: one living with her son's family, one living alone and able to maintain her lower-middle class lifestyle on her pension, and one living alone in abject poverty.

Many middle class respondents lived in very small, crowded residences with relatives and expressed a desire to obtain separate housing for their nuclear family. Some professional upper-middle class respondents complained about having apartments with only two bedrooms, though they did not live with relatives. What did unite the respondents was their belief that the government was ultimately responsible for providing more and better public housing as well as creating more jobs and raising salaries to enable men to better support their families. Indeed, this proved to be a recurring theme throughout the interviews.

Thus, it was not surprising that respondents objected to what they perceived as false promises projected by the entertainment industries. In spite of the difficulties most Egyptians face surviving from day to day, including the necessity of postponing marriage for years because they cannot meet their economic responsibilities, the entertainment industries portray affluent lifestyles. Furthermore, the reduction of everything, including relationships, to commodities which can be bought and sold infuriated all the respondents. They blamed the government for allowing this to occur. Most respondents believed that the attitudes and behavior exhibited in the entertainment industry and commercial advertisements encouraged men to divorce their wives and engage in immoral behavior. These comments are illustrative of respondents' beliefs and experience in this regard:

> Why don't they do movies about ordinary women? Why do they do movies about these bad women? I don't usually go to Arabic movies, but I was told that movies and video tapes for sale here which you don't see on t.v., like women wearing bathing suits, bikinis, and very short skirts -- the sort of things you don't see on t.v. -- seems like a means of attracting the male audience. I don't know. People usually don't see women wearing these things, like short skirts. The majority of men here would only see such things in the movies. They don't have access to such things otherwise. They don't have access to clubs where women wear dresses different from their wives and sisters. There are high society parties that they cannot get into and they get only a glimpse of this atmosphere in these movies. A lot of these men, if we listen to what they say, cannot get married and are very frustrated, and so this is only aggravating this feeling of frustration that they have if they see a movie like this. People are saying men cannot get a flat or a decent living, and so they cannot get married until quite late -- usually after 30. If the bride wants to live with the husband's parents, they can do that, but most do not want to. If the man cannot work in the Arab countries and make a lot of money, he has to wait until age 30 or 35 to get married. This is very different from the past. I don't know what the situation is for the *fallaḥīn*. It may not be the same problem; but definitely in the city, this is a big problem, especially housing and wages. You see students walking around in a very Westernized way; and when the hostel used to be here next door, some of the female students complained that they were harassed at night by male students in the streets. The street lighting was not bright and men would walk after the girls between the campus and the hostel and say bad things to them and even masturbating in front of them right in the street. I had a friend of mine who was actually told that she would be given anything she wants if she would go down one of these small side streets here. He walked behind her and kept on like this until she got away from him. If men see women dressed this way, it aggravates this frustration even more and makes it worse. (Respondent #26 for photo #31)

> We have no time these days for anything. You have to take into account the economic situation most people find themselves in. Most people have not enough money. They are busy trying to feed themselves and their families. There is no time for anything else. Many cannot marry because they do not have the money to support a family. This puts great pressure on people, especially men. We have to take this into account when we judge these pictures. What might be ok for you and me would be completely unacceptable in this society now. We also have to take into consideration those conservative people. You know, this is still a very religious country and with the fundamentalist problem, we do not want to offend these people. Sometimes these people who do this advertisements do not take into account the community, the society into which they are put and they are not appropriate for it. Yes [these ads are made by Egyptians], but much of the money comes from the [Arab] Gulf. These people come here to Cairo to enjoy themselves and sometimes they forget this is supposed to be a Muslim country, too. This one is really obscene, *yānī*. I can't look at it. I can't believe that this is in the streets for all to see. It is really the bottom of vulgar and

> **obscene. It gives everybody a very bad picture about women, especially about Egyptian women, since Nadia al-Gindī is Egyptian. I don't know how she can do this. Her gestures here are very obscene. She is naked. I hate it. (Respondent #19 for photo #31)**

Respondents had mixed reactions about the government. On the one hand, they believed that the government should ensure their rights, yet they did not trust the government. Many respondents were angry with the government for allowing the demonization of women in the entertainment industry as discussed in Chapter Six. The alternative, being subject only to the direct authority of male kin or husband was not viewed favorably by most respondents.

B3. Women's Right to Choose Their Own Social Roles

Respondents were asked another set of questions to ascertain whether they believed that women are free to choose their own social roles or whether they must defer to the wishes of their fathers, husbands, sons, or other male relatives. The rationale for this set of questions flows from the deeply-rooted belief amongst Muslims in Egypt that Islam requires women to be obedient to their male guardian(s), first to their fathers, then to their husbands, and perhaps later to their sons or other male relatives in exchange for protection, housing, and maintenance ('[*q*]*ismah* or *nafaqah*). Another important belief which is somewhat related is the belief that women are not allowed to leave the household without the permission of their male guardians. Thus, women's social roles, particularly outside the household, are ultimately dependent upon male permission. This is particularly important regarding women's employment since men are entirely responsible for supporting their families. Another belief, that men are superior to women and, hence, have authority over them is also related to the belief that women must obey their male guardians. Thus, respondents were asked about these traditional beliefs.

When respondents were asked if husbands (or other male guardians) have the right to control their wives' activities in general, including leaving the household, not surprisingly, 51% respondents agreed, reflecting the continuing strength of this social norm. Four respondents agreed, but said that the decisions should be consensual and based on equality of husband and wife, reflecting a more modern approach, yet still requiring the husband's permission. Nevertheless, 41.2% disagreed completely, indicating sizable opposition to the traditional norm.

Although age did not appear to be salient to respondents' attitudes, education was very important. Not surprisingly, 93.8% of the respondents with no higher education believed that husbands (or other male guardians) have the right to control their wives' activities, but only 42.9% of those with higher education agreed, indicating a significant liberalizing influence of higher education on women's beliefs about this old, patriarchal tradition.

A woman's social roles outside the household are far more contentious than her general activities within the household because traditionally, women are expected to remain inside the household. Therefore, respondents were asked if a woman's social roles in general are her free choice so long as her male guardian(s), particularly the husband, agrees. Somewhat surprisingly, 76.5% of respondents believed that women should have a choice of social roles, though not all believed that the husband's permission was necessarily required.[21] Five respondents were uncertain.[22] Only 13.5% of respondents supported the most traditional position, that a woman's social roles are socially proscribed and not open to change, even with her husband's permission.

Clearly, as in the previous questions, the vast majority, 72.5%, of the respondents believed that a woman's social roles are subject to her husband's permission and social prescription. Only nine respondents believed that the woman's social roles are a matter of her own free choice and that her husband's permission was not required.

This belief that women's social roles are limited by the wishes of their male guardians as well as by social prescription became even more clear-cut when the respondents were asked if a woman's social roles are or should be the woman's free choice, regardless of the husband's opinion and without asking his permission, and without any other limitation. Only five respondents agreed. Three other respondents said, "Yes, ideally, but that this would be very difficult for women in Egypt to do because husbands would not allow it," and four were uncertain. In contrast, 76.5% of the respondents said, "No." This reflected the fact that even some of the respondents who said that the husband's permission was not required in a woman's choice of social roles believed that there are social proscriptions which do, in fact, set limits on women's choice of social roles.

As might be expected from the preceding views, twenty-seven (52.9%) respondents agreed with the traditional requirement that a wife must obey her husband (or other male guardian) because he is superior to her and, thus, that his authority over her is based on male superiority over women. Six respondents took the middle ground, stating that wives must obey their husbands, but that husbands are not superior to their wives. Opposition to both norms was still sizeable, with 35.3% of respondents stating that wives do not have to obey their husbands and that husbands are not superior to their wives. In fact, one of these dissenting respondents remarked that "...in fact, wives are more responsible and more experienced than their husbands about family matters and so should be free to make their own choices."[23]

While there was no pattern based on age which explains the respondents' beliefs about the necessity of the male guardian's permission for a woman's activities, there was a weak pattern for their acceptance of male superiority over women. Respondents aged fifty-five and older and those under the age of twenty held the most traditional belief that men are superior to women, whereas those in between were more evenly divided in their beliefs.

A parallel pattern appeared between respondents' beliefs about the necessity of men's permission for women's activities and their beliefs about the traditional acceptance of male superiority over women: 62.9% of respondents with higher education did not believe that men are superior to women, compared to only 12.5% of those with less education. While 48.6% of the respondents with higher education believed that wives must obey their husbands, all of the women with less education agreed. Within this same group of respondents, four of the women with higher education believed that husbands were not superior to wives but, nevertheless, are obliged to obey their husbands, as did two with less education. Thus, while 51.4% of respondents with higher education believed that wives do not have to obey their husbands and also that husbands are not superior to wives, none of those with less education agreed. These responses reflect the very strong social norm that husbands have the right to control their wives' activities, especially amongst the less educated who make up the vast majority of Egyptian women.

All eighteen (35.3%) respondents who believed that husbands are not superior to their wives and that wives do not have to obey their husbands had completed at least one university degree. Four of the six other respondents who believed that husbands are not superior to wives but that wives must obey their husbands also had completed a university degree and the other two had at least some high school education. The most conservative position, that husbands are superior to wives and that wives must obey their husbands, was supported by 87.5% of respondents with no higher education, but it also included 37% of the those who had university education. This reflects the fact that this particular belief, that men are superior to women, is a very strong social norm in Egypt and so it was not surprising to find women at all educational levels supporting it. In general, respondents were more willing to support the traditional, patriarchal belief that women must obey men in exchange for their protection and support because it is dictated in the *Qur'ān* (and also integral to Coptic Christian practices), though they are less willing to accept the belief that men are superior to women as its justification.

Integrating respondents' views about male superiority discussed above, it appeared that although 76.5% of the respondents believed that women should not be free to choose their own social roles, significantly fewer of them -- 52.9% -- considered a husband's authority over his wife to be based on male superiority. It is also clear that the slight majority of respondents who believed that husbands are superior to wives also believed that the husband's permission is necessary in a woman's choice of social roles and that husbands have the right to control their wives' activities in general.

Respondents who believed that it was necessary for a wife to get her husband's permission for her social roles and even her activities in general believed that husbands would not agree to anything immoral or bad for the family and, hence, obtaining his permission would not be problematic, whether or not they believed that husbands were superior to wives. An even more conservative position was expressed by others who believed that the husband's permission was irrelevant because women's activities and social roles are socially proscribed. These answers, however, are all rooted in the respondents' belief that they are proscribed by Coptic Christianity and Islam and not open to question.

A large number of variables were investigated to ascertain their salience in explaining the respondents' answers. Age appeared to be salient, but education proved to be far more important. Furthermore, social class was particularly salient. In terms of age, there seemed to be a similar pattern of being more conservative amongst the eight respondents aged fifty-five years and older as well as for the two teenaged respondents who believed that women's roles were their free choice so long as their husbands agreed, and also that husbands have the right to control their wives' activities, and that wives must obey their husbands because husbands are superior to wives. When asked if a woman's social roles are her free choice regardless of the opinion of others, respondents aged fifty-five and older and both teenagers strongly disagreed. Hence, a clear pattern emerged based on age: the oldest and the youngest were the most conservative in their responses to this set of questions about women's freedom to choose their social roles.

When education is taken into account, it becomes clear that higher education had a liberalizing and even an emancipatory effect on respondents' conceptualization of gender, particularly regarding women's freedom to choose their social roles without being dependent upon the permission of their husbands. Even though the belief that a wife must obtain her husband's permission for her activities and social roles beyond being mother, wife, and housewife is a strong social norm deeply rooted in both Coptic Christianity and Islam, significantly fewer respondents (77%) with university education than those with less education (93%) supported this norm. Nevertheless, the fact that 82.4% of respondents supported this social norm is indicative of its continued importance.

Respondents who believed that the husband's permission is not required for a woman's choice of social roles as well as those who had the most liberal view that a woman's husband should not oppose her choice of social roles all held university degrees and were from upper-middle class and elite families. Thus, a combination of high social class and higher education are salient in explaining the deviance of this minority of respondents from this strong social norm.

Analyzing the answers of respondents about the question of whether or not a woman's social roles were her own free choice, regardless of the opinion of anyone else, including her husband, there was less certainty amongst the respondents with higher education. In keeping with the strong social norm of proscribed gender roles, 80% of the respondents with higher education were opposed to women's free choice of social roles, compared to 93.8% of respondents with less education. This is a very strong indication of the level of opposition to women's unlimited choice of social roles. In fact, only 20% of the respondents with higher education believed that women should be able to freely choose their social roles, compared to only one of those with less education, and she added the *caveat* that it would be difficult to do in Egypt.

C. Women's Right to Participate in Civil Society

Women were actively involved in public life in ancient Egypt. Since then, however, they had not been encouraged to do so until after the 1952 Revolution. Egyptian women were the first in the Arab world to gain the formal right to vote with the 1956 Constitution. They were also actively encouraged to join the workforce in both the public and private sectors. Although it is the norm in Egypt today for women to participate in public life, it was a revolutionary idea at the time it was reintroduced in Egyptian society by the Nāsir regime. The only two positions from which women are still barred in Egypt are the judiciary and religious office, a practice followed by *Sunnī* Muslims.

Because of the widespread belief that women must obey their husbands and the increasing agitation by Islamic fundamentalists to prevent women from entering the public sphere, respondents were asked if women have the right to participate in public life, and whether, in fact, women should appear in public, join voluntary associations, vote and even hold public office, and be employed. Forty-seven (92.2%) of the respondents agreed that women have these rights and should participate in public life in general; two respondents said that women do have these rights but require their husband's permission to exercise them. Only two respondents said that women do not have these rights.[24] Respondents' beliefs about the right of husbands to control their wive's activities and the duty of wives to obey their husbands have already been discussed above.

It is interesting to note here that one of the two respondents who said that the husband's permission was required for a woman to leave her household for any reason was herself under the daily supervision of her mother-in-law; her husband often locked her inside the household to make sure that she did not leave without his permission. The husband had two concerns: that his wife would voluntarily have contact with unrelated men and/or that such men would "force themselves" upon his wife during his absence. These are not unrealistic concerns and neither is locking the wife inside the household an uncommon practice in Egypt. While many of the respondents were upset about these realities, they all acknowledged the husband's right in Islam to confine his wife to the household if he so insisted.

While being secluded inside the household was considered an extreme practice by most respondents, it is beginning to gain more support in Egypt even among women because of a dramatic increase in the cost of living coupled with rising unemployment: women are tired of working hard juggling so many roles just to subsist, while at the same time being ridiculed by men who believe women do not belong in the public sphere and that the employment of women is responsible for male unemployment.

All of the respondents with higher education agreed that women have the right to participate in public life, compared to 75% of those with less education. It was apparent that even the most conservative of the respondents, those espousing a literalist interpretation of Islam, supported this right, viewing it as a religious right, not just as a secular one. Just what participation in public life meant in particular to the respondents, however, is discussed below.

C1. Participation in Political and Social Life

Most of the respondents have voted and appeared regularly in public. Respondents' answers to the question about women's right to appear in public, vote, and hold public office were the same as reported above regarding women's right to participate in civil society: only two opposed these rights for women.

Interestingly, virtually all the respondents said that they did not consider themselves suitable for holding public office, either because they lacked the necessary education and/or social class or because they were too busy with their jobs and/or their families. None of the respondents saw themselves as becoming politically active, even those few who were interested in politics. Respondents explained that they did not believe politics to be gender-appropriate or woman-friendly. Some respondents, however, expressed admiration for the efforts of some well-known women politicians to improve the lives of women. In addition, many respondents were proud of the efforts of Jihān Sadāt and Suzanne Mubārak to influence their husbands to be more sensitive to "women's issues" as well as for their considerable charity work.

Only seven respondents had ever belonged to any voluntary associations, but they were very active and had memberships in two or three women's organizations simultaneously. All but one of these associations were secular; eight of the ten formal associations named were Egyptian, and two were national chapters of Western international organizations.[25] In addition, one of these active respondents belonged to several feminist writers' collectives, but she was atypical of the other active women ideologically. Some of these active respondents also belonged to informal feminist consciousness-raising groups comprised primarily of friends.

The respondents active in voluntary associations said that they were working to secure the rights guaranteed to women by Islam for local, primarily uneducated, women. They were not, however, challenging the traditional, patriarchal essentialist and complementary notion of sex and gender which underlies those rights. Thus, in voicing these views, they reflected the same notion of gender held by most Egyptian women, that women's primary duties and roles are within the household as mothers, wives, and housekeepers (Rugh, 1984 and 1985). If a woman wished to be employed outside the household or even earn money inside the household, she must first fulfil her domestic duties. Even the few respondents and informants who were feminists and who rejected this traditional notion of gender said that it would be impossible for them to express their feminist views, particularly in their work with voluntary associations, because these ideas were still taboo in Egypt. Thus, the most progressive view they could put forth in their public work was to assert the rights of women as set out by Islam.

Education was, again, the most salient variable in accounting for women's attitudes and behavior regarding participation in voluntary associations; however, unlike the previous questions about women's rights, social class also emerged as very salient. Six of the seven active women held at least one university degree and the other was an elite middle-aged woman who had some academic high school. Furthermore, all of the respondents who belonged to voluntary associations were from upper-middle and upper class families. The vast majority of respondents, as with Egyptian women in general, were not active in voluntary associations, not even women's groups (Antonius, 1993; confidential interviews). Participation in voluntary associations is considered a prerogative, if not a duty, of elite women in Egyptian society, exemplified by the charitable work of Jihān Sadāt and Suzanne Mubārak.

Another factor which seemed likely to affect a woman's conceptualization of gender as well as her behavior is travel abroad, whether as a tourist, to study, or for employment. Travel outside Egypt is extremely difficult for a woman alone, particularly if she is not married. It is much more likely that a woman would travel abroad with her father or husband. Furthermore, even if a woman had not travelled abroad, if her father or husband had done so, it might have an effect on her. Exposure to other societies may have a liberalizing effect on men's and women's values, particularly regarding the role of women. Thus, I wanted to see if the respondents' beliefs and behavior about gender-appropriate social roles for women had been influenced by travel abroad.

Although 66.7% of respondents had travelled abroad, there were distinct differences in education and social class between those who had travelled abroad and those who had not. While only 17.1% of respondents with higher education had never left Egypt, this was the case for 68.8% of those with less education. In fact, none of the respondents with preparatory schooling or less had ever left Egypt for any reason. Those respondents with high school education who had travelled abroad were older, from elite, upper-middle class families or were married to an elite man. Amongst younger, middle class Egyptian women, there is a relatively high proportion who have gained higher education because of Nāsir's policy of increased access and emphasis upon free higher education for women since the 1960's; however, social class differences amongst this group are reflected, in part, by differential opportunities for travel abroad. It is clear from these data that the more education a woman had and the higher her social class, the more likely it was that she would travel abroad.

Secondly, the respondents who had travelled abroad fell into two groups: those who had travelled only within the Middle East and those who had travelled more widely.[26] The range of countries to which some respondents had travelled was truly global.[27] Obviously, the cultures respondents experienced abroad would vary widely and so would their influence on respondents. Closely linked to this is the reason for travel, which varied widely amongst the respondents.

It is also important to know whether respondents' fathers had ever travelled, studied, or worked abroad, regardless of whether the respondents themselves had travelled abroad because this could have affected the attitudes and behavior of respondents with regard to gender. In fact, fifteen respondents had fathers who had travelled abroad, some of whom had also studied and/or worked abroad. All except one of these fathers had at least one university degree and spoke fluent English, indicating high social class. Their daughters, the respondents, had university degrees except two who were students.

Furthermore, twenty-one respondents had husbands, or former husbands, or fiancés who had travelled abroad, whether as tourists, students, or workers; however, 28.6% of these respondents also had fathers who had travelled abroad. Not surprisingly, of the respondents whose fathers and husbands had travelled abroad, five spoke fluent English and one spoke fluent French; all but one who had an elite high school education had at least one university degree; and all were from upper-middle and upper class families.

It is clear that social class and education, and to a lesser extent occupation and age, are factors influencing the opportunities for respondents' fathers and/or husbands to travel, study, and work abroad -- as indeed is the case for the respondents themselves. Egyptians from upper-middle and upper class families speak fluent English and/or French, are highly educated, and most lead modern, Westernized life-styles in Egypt. Therefore, travel abroad, particularly beyond the Arab world, is not as daunting as it would be for those from lower social classes. Travel within the Arab world can be relatively easy or difficult for Egyptians, depending upon the political situation, but religion, language, and general culture are relatively similar. Depending upon one's interpretation of Islam, living in another Arab country can be very comfortable or it can be very confining. Nevertheless, travel abroad gives all Egyptians an opportunity to live in a different cultural milieu and to rethink what it means to be Egyptian. Thus, notions of Egyptian identity, particularly with regard to gender and gender roles, may become more central in the thinking of persons who have travelled abroad. What is most interesting about this is that the effects of travel abroad on respondents' notions about gender and Egyptian identity were not necessarily liberalizing in the sense of becoming more modern or even more tolerant of differences. For some, the effect was to become more tolerant and more liberal, but for others, it resulted in a more strict, literal, conservative interpretation of Islam and a more restrictive, sex-segregated life-style.

In the case of the respondents who had lived abroad, several who had studied in Sa'udi Arabia or Kuwait reported being very disturbed by the discrepancies between what they imagined their status vis-à-vis the locals and how the status accorded them by the locals. For these particular respondents, their reaction was to become less restrictive and more tolerant. Even those respondents whose entire education from grade one through grade twelve was completed in one of these two countries said that their experience was so negative that they were left with a great deal of anger towards "Arabs". For instance, even though the respondents and/or their families were much more educated than the locals, they were treated as subordinates. They were tolerated rather than welcomed as students and workers. Furthermore, the Arab locals believed that all Egyptian women were prostitutes and low class, because of prejudice and the immense influence of the Arab mass media which reinforced this stereotype. Therefore, they were despised and shunned. Even though these Egyptians were very pious Muslims, they could not overcome the negative stereotype Arabs held of Egyptian women. This experience served to liberalize the interpretation of religion held by the respondents. An example is the complete rejection of sex-segregation, which is the norm in Sa'udi Arabia not only in schools but all public institutions and even within the household, by respondents who had these negative experiences there. Even respondents who had been educated in Kuwait where sex-segregation is not mandatory became more opposed to sex-segregation and literal, conservative interpretations of Islam than they or their parents had been prior to travelling abroad. They became more modern, more Westernized, and less concerned about the rituals of religion than they had been, believing that emphasis on formal rituals without love or even tolerance for others was empty and not the point of religion. The result is that these respondents became more tolerant of different values, ideas, and life-styles in general but less tolerant of the restrictive outlook of Sa'udi Arabian society.

For other respondents, however, travel to the Arab countries sparked or reinforced a desire to turn away from modern, Western life-styles and adoption of a more literal, conservative interpretation of Islam. This also resulted in adoption of the *higāb*, ending employment, remaining inside the household most of the time, leaving the household only with a husband or male relative, attending religion classes and services at the local mosque, and sex-segregating the household. Sex-segregation of the household entails providing separate rooms for males and females to eat and socialize. This is becoming particularly popular with lower-middle and middle class families in Egypt now as a result of the increased support for Islamic fundamentalism. For these respondents, Egyptian society has become corrupted by unIslamic influences, particularly Western influences, and Egyptian identity can only be restored through an emulation of Arab Islamic values and life-style. This results in these respondents becoming much less tolerant than they had been of other values, ideas, and life-styles.

For one respondent, working in Sa'udi Arabia had an unintended influence on her daughter. While the respondent and her husband had studied and worked in the U.S.A., they later opted to work in Sa'udi Arabia so that they could be closer to their relatives in Egypt and so that their children could be raised in a Muslim country. Much to her dismay, however, her daughter became extremely rigid in her interpretation of Islam, adopting the *higāb* and becoming *muḥaggabah*. Despite becoming a physician, the daughter refused to be employed and has remained a secluded housewife and mother of five children in Cairo. Her mother, the respondent, remained employed in a professional job, working in Cairo, though she has also adopted the *ḥigāb* because of social pressure. In discussing this with me, she lamented that she had hoped her daughter would have a less restricted life than she had, and yet, the daughter has chosen to adopt an even more restrictive life-style than the respondent.

Another respondent whose husband worked in Sa'udi Arabia for several years chose to remain in Cairo with her children in order to avoid some of these problems. She worked as a research scientist and visited her husband only once per year. Her children rarely travelled to visit their father. The husband could visit them in Cairo only one month per year. This respondent chose to remain in her apartment and continue life without her husband as if he were present -- something almost unheard of in Egypt. Although this respondent and her family were very religious, she was aware of the negative treatment Egyptians had received from locals in the Arab Gulf states and she was not willing to endure the humiliation. Her sense of pride in being Egyptian and the importance she placed on her children growing up to be proud of being Egyptian outweighed any inconvenience or disadvantage she faced by not accompanying her husband to Sa'udi Arabia. Fortunately for her, her husband was in complete agreement with this arrangement. He has since returned to Cairo to work and her children were all at university, so family life has returned to "normal". The main affect of her husband's working in Sa'udi Arabia on the respondent and her children is the amount of money and material goods they accumulated which has made a significant improvement in their standard of living.

Just as there were differences amongst respondents who had travelled to the Arab countries, so, too, were there similar differences amongst respondents who had travelled to the West. Some found the experience to be invigorating intellectually and culturally while others found it alienating and unbearable. Even though the general level of education is much higher in the West than in Egypt, respondents and their fathers and/or husbands had more education than the majority of people. They still experienced prejudice, whether as Arabs, Egyptians, or Muslims. Because their cultural and religious heritage does not lie in the West, these respondents were able to maintain their sense of separateness and even superiority vis-à-vis Westerners while living abroad. While some respondents maintained their Westernized life-styles and liberal attitudes towards religion, others were disillusioned with their experience of living in the West. For this latter group, the West did not live up to their expectations. In fact, they found many aspects of Western life which were previously unknown to them to be particularly "evil". The open commercialization of sex in terms of pornography and prostitution, the prevalence of sexual violence, infidelity, premarital sex, and neglect or outright abandonment of housework and child-care were all cited by some respondents as serious social problems prevalent in the West that were virtually unheard of by most Egyptians, at least until very recently. Their subsequent disillusionment with the West sparked a new interest in Islam, even fundamentalist Islam, and in a non-Westernized Egyptian identity. The transformation which occurred in some of these respondents was truly amazing: from glamorous beauties in European designer clothing entertaining and socializing almost nightly to reclusive housewives devoid of make-up and fashionable clothing, avoiding any verbal or physical contact with non-relatives, particularly men. In conclusion, while it is apparent that travel abroad does have an influence on the respondents' notions of gender and Egyptian identity, this influence is not necessarily liberalizing. Different respondents have had very different reactions to their experiences abroad.

C2. The Right to Employment

The vast majority of Egyptian women have been contributing to family income through their productive labor since at least the early Pharaonic era. Unlike other aspects of women's participation in public and civic life, women's productive labor has not been suspended for cultural reasons due to the simple fact that women work out of necessity: their survival depends upon their subsistence labor. Nevertheless, it is clearly proscribed in Islam that men are entirely responsible for all the economic needs of the family; women have no financial responsibilities towards their families of origin nor towards their families of procreation. As discussed above, husbands have control over their wives' activities, and women cannot be employed without their husband's permission. Therefore, despite the fact that most Egyptian women still work out of economic necessity, there is a very strong social norm that men are the breadwinners; a working woman still casts a shadow of shame on her husband. The following comment captures many of the elements of gender identity, women's rights, and women's roles discussed above:

> Women here are smart. They don't show men -- they [women] may act stupid, but really they are smart and in control. Women are usually in control. If you go to any household, you will find that the woman is the one who is controlling her household. The man just worries about his job, but the woman takes care of all the household things and children.
>
> There are some men who will not let their women outside the house, but they are mainly the really religious or stingy people and their number is declining. Such men are very jealous. About half our men are very jealous and don't like their wives to be seen by other men. Men are becoming very busy now. If there was an agreement before marriage that the woman would not leave their house, then women will agree, but if not, then the woman will never agree. Women will do anything to make their husbands' happy if they love them, but not if they don't love them.
>
> *Mu'allimāt* is a dying breed because more girls are getting an education. Society is changing. Men should be responsible for women and take care of them. Men should protect women. Within the household itself, women should be in control, however. The man must give the woman the money necessary for running the household. The woman must run the household and be responsible for the children and housework. If the woman wants to work outside the household and her husband doesn't allow it, she must try to convince her husband to agree. If the woman wanted to work, she should have this in her marriage contract or she should get his permission earlier in the marriage. The price would be very high for her if she disobeys her husband. She may get divorced and/or her neighbors and relatives may disown her or treat her badly. The price of divorce here is very high on women. Women here are not free. If we had freedom, there would be many things I would like to do, but I cannot. The control I mean is in the running of the household and taking care of the children. (Respondent #27 for photo #35)

Respondents were asked if they believed that it is acceptable for a wife to work inside her household to supplement the family income if her domestic responsibilities were fulfilled first. Then they were asked the same question about the acceptability of a wife accepting employment outside the household. Comparing the answers for these two questions brought out an interesting distinction in the notion of acceptable work for women. While 60.8% of respondents believed, even if reluctantly, that it was acceptable for women to take in extra work **inside** the household to supplement the family income if necessary, 90.2% believed that it was acceptable for women to be employed **outside** the household for the same purpose. Furthermore, none of the respondents were uncertain about the right of women to accept work **inside** the household, but two were uncertain about women being employed **outside** the household.

Age was not salient in explaining respondents' answers; however, when education and social class of respondents were taken into account, some interesting patterns emerged. While 93.8% of respondents with no higher education agreed that women may work **within** the household, only 45.7% of the those with higher education agreed. Regarding wives' employed **outside** the household (if their domestic responsibilities were fulfilled), all the respondents with higher education agreed, compared to 68.8% of those with less education. Thus, the respondents made a significant distinction between working within and outside of the household. It is also apparent that this distinction is more important to those with higher education than to those with less education. Furthermore, five university-educated respondents gave an extremely radical response, stating not only that wives do not need their husband's permission to work inside or outside the household, but that they also do not have to have their domestic responsibilities fulfilled beforehand.

Interestingly, 54.3% of the women with higher education believed that women should not engage in income-generating work **within** the household, even if domestic responsibilities are fulfilled first, while only one woman with less education gave this response. None of the women with higher education opposed women being employed **outside** the household if their domestic responsibilities were fulfilled, while the three respondents who opposed this had less education, and so did the two who were uncertain. Amongst the respondents who were opposed to working inside and/or outside the household, the distinction between the place of work was, again, more important for respondents with higher education than for those with less education.

One respondent provided an answer which appeared to hold the key to explaining the discrepancy amongst responses seemingly based on education: "Yes, women may engage in income-generating work within the household if it is decent and the husband agrees, but only if the husband is an inadequate breadwinner; but remember that this is a serious violation of gender role for the woman because the husband must be the breadwinner." She lamented the fact that there were far too many men these days who did not adequately support their families. She believed that this was because poor men were marrying too early and because they were not educated and hence, could not obtain decent employment. Her response when asked if women could accept employment outside the household was: "Yes, but only if the woman has a respectable profession. It is better that women do not work, but some professional women want to practice their profession; however, I am strictly opposed to non-professional women working." This respondent was a middle-aged elite woman with some academic high school education. She made it clear that men were to be the breadwinners and that it was shameful and degrading for women to be employed. Being quite rich and never having worked herself, she had no idea about the economic realities faced by most Egyptian women.

Thus, social class appeared to be the most salient factor in explaining the respondents' answers about women's right to work within and outside of the household. Women with university education, and most likely to have middle and upper class status, were opposed to women taking in work within the household but not to being employed outside the household because this reflected the type of work being done by educated women as well as the disdain they had for household labor. They employed servants to do their own domestic labor.[28] It also reflected their greater employment opportunities for higher status and higher income jobs. The situation for women with less education, however, was the opposite: they had fewer opportunities to obtain employment outside the household and so had a greater incentive to generate income by working inside the household in order to contribute to the family's subsistence. Their primary employment opportunities outside the household consisted of doing domestic labor for educated women, sweeping the streets, or selling things in the streets.

Another significant but related difference between the answers obtained for these two questions was that while none of the respondents said that they were uncertain about whether women may work **inside** the household if their domestic duties were fulfilled, two women with no higher education gave this answer when asked if a woman may work **outside** the household if her domestic duties were fulfilled. I believe that this reflected the social norm that women are expected to remain within the household and that the public sphere of employment is more appropriate for men, since males are expected to be the breadwinners. Nāsir's attempt to change this has not been entirely successful; and, with the resurgence of Islamic fundamentalism, this old norm has been gaining more support even amongst the middle class. Thus, different interpretations of religion and gender as well as social class and education shaped the beliefs and behavior of Egyptians, as reflected in the answers of the respondents.

Further evidence of this influence of class, and to a lesser extent also interpretation of religion, on conceptualization of gender is the fact that a greater number of women believed that it was necessary to get the husband's permission for a woman to work **outside** the household than to take work in within the household. Thus, 38.7% of respondents who believed that wives may take in work **within** the household if their domestic duties were fulfilled believed that the husband's permission was necessary and/or that the work must be gender-appropriate, whereas 28.3% of those who believed that wives may work **outside** the household if their domestic duties were fulfilled believed that the husband's permission was necessary and/or that the work must be gender-appropriate. While seven respondents with no higher education believed that the husband's permission was necessary to work inside and/or outside the household, significantly fewer respondents with higher education agreed: five believed it was necessary to have the husband's permission to work inside the household, and six believed that this was necessary to work outside the household. Clearly, working within the household was more gender-appropriate for the women with no higher education than was working outside the household.

C2a. Actual Employment History of Respondents

Having explored the beliefs of respondents regarding the right of women to engage in income-generating work, whether inside or outside the household, respondents were asked a series of questions about their own actual employment history: had they **ever** been employed outside the household and/or did they expect or desire to be employed in the future. They were also asked if they were **currently** employed, whether inside or outside the household at the time of the interview.

While 70.6% of respondents had worked **outside** the household **at some time** in their lives, 29.4% had never earned an income. Education was particularly salient: 77.1% of respondents with higher education worked or had worked at least sometimes, but only 37.5% of those with less education had done so.

At the time of the interviews, of the thirty-six respondents who had ever been employed outside the household, 52.8% were working full-time and 27.8% were working part-time. The other 19.4% were no longer working for a variety of reasons.[29] Again, education was important in determining employment opportunities for women: 79.3% of respondents **employed at the time of the interviews** had higher education. This included 89.5% of those working full-time and 60% of those working part-time.

It is not surprising that the respondents who had never been employed believed that women should remain at home with their children and look after the household. This group of respondents included nine who were married to rich husbands, two who were lower-middle class, and one who was illiterate. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that two of these wealthy women wanted to be employed outside the house because they were bored and their children were in university; however, their husbands forbade them from working. That means that only 23.5% of all the respondents believed that women should remain at home, unemployed, even if their children were adults and they no longer had any child-care responsibilities.

In fact, all six of the women with higher education who had never worked believed that women could and should be employed, *albeit* after their children had grown up. This contrasts with 66.7% those with less education who believed categorically that women should not be employed, particularly outside the household, because it was a gross violation of women's gender role: the husband must be the breadwinner. Caution is required here in interpreting this, since many of these poor women did, in fact, work very hard to contribute to the subsistence of the family; however, they were not paid for their labor and they did not consider it "work". While the six respondents holding this most conservative position did not have higher education, they came from diverse social classes: three were from the old upper class elite, one was middle class, one was lower-middle class, and one was illiterate. Furthermore, all six women who opposed married women's employment were middle-aged and elderly. Here we see a complex combination of social class, education, and age influencing not only women's values but also their opportunities and choices.

Of the thirty-two currently employed respondents whose employment sector was identified, 34.4% worked in the public sector; 50% worked in the private sector; and 9.4% worked in both the public and private sectors. Four respondents were retired, but two had worked in the public sector and two had worked in the private sector. Thus, 50% of respondents were or had worked in the public sector, while 65.5% were or had worked in the private sector. Salaries are generally substantially higher in the private sector than in the public sector, particularly since the 1970's. Although job security is much greater in the public sector, Egyptians generally try to gain employment in the more lucrative private sector.

The occupations of the respondents, regardless of education, spanned a broad spectrum.[30] The number of university-educated respondents who were or had worked in the public sector was about the same as those in the private sector; however, all of the women with less education were working in the private sector. This is because three of the illiterates were working as servants and/or *bawābāt* for private households, and two women with high school education worked as secretaries in private companies. Thus, respondents with higher education had a broader range of employment possibilities in both the private and public sectors, providing greater earning power than those with less education. Although those respondents with less education were employed in the private sector, they had very insecure, part-time employment, primarily domestic service for wealthier families.

A wide range of factors emerged as important influences on respondents' employment histories. Status as a student, marriage, parental status, access to more expensive modes of transportation or proximity of residence to place of employment, travel abroad, and control over independent income all affected respondents' employment.

In general, students have not been employed, but with increased economic pressures and fewer employment opportunities, women are more likely to accept part-time employment, particularly if it is related to their field of study. Amongst the respondents, one high school student and two university students had never been employed. Two unmarried graduate students, however, were employed at the university. Five other single respondents who had completed university were all employed full-time. The two remaining single respondents had completed high school and were also employed full-time.

For some of the respondents, marriage meant giving up employment in order to be a good mother and good wife. For others, however, employment began only after marriage. In fact, 34.2% of the thirty-eight ever-married respondents reported that they had never been employed, whether inside or outside the household; 7.9% worked before but not after marriage; 44.8% worked after marriage but not before marriage; and 13.2% worked both before and after marriage. Thus, quite a different pattern emerged between those respondents with higher education and those with less education.[31]

Of married respondents with higher education, 20% never worked, compared to 61.5% of those with less education; 54.2% with higher education worked after marriage, though not before marriage, compared to 30.8% of those with less education; 20% of those with higher education worked both before and after marriage, compared to none of those with less education; 8% of those with higher education worked before marriage but not after marriage, compared to 7.8% of those with less education.

Here, again, there is an interaction of variables which explain these different patterns. Social class, education, age, and whether or not the woman has young children are important in accounting for women's employment. For instance, one of the women who had worked before marriage but not after, had two preschool-aged children and believed that a mother's place was at home caring for her children. Another woman who stopped working when she married was lower-middle class, barely literate, and did not have children. Even though she seemingly accepted the apparent infertility of her union, she believed that it was the husband's responsibility to work and she wanted to be a full-time wife. The third woman who ceased employment at marriage was an elite woman with a university degree who worked for professional interest until marriage, when her priority shifted to being a full-time wife and mother.

On the other hand, all five respondents who worked both before and after marriage were upper-middle class women with university degrees who spoke impeccable English and held professional jobs. They had also travelled outside Egypt and most had studied and/or worked abroad as well. Three of those women had young children but continued working, one was childless, and the fifth was widowed and elderly. Except for the widow, these respondents had husbands who were extremely good breadwinners. Thus, they were working because they chose to continue their professions. The elderly widow was independently wealthy but chose to work for professional interest.

The majority of middle and upper-middle class women in Egypt become engaged before or by the time they complete their first university degree and marry at about the same time as they convocate. Hence, they do not have much opportunity to be employed before marriage. It is noteworthy, however, to note that nine single respondents in this study were employed full-time and the other three who were never employed were full-time students. Many married women are employed for some time until they start their families, at which point some will give up employment to be full-time mothers, though some remain employed, even part-time, because of financial pressures. Some lower-middle class women who are pursuing post-secondary education may be forced to have part-time employment in order to avoid earlier marriage and/or to complete their studies. Some will give up their employment when they marry, though others will continue working, even if part-time, because of financial pressures. Illiterate women, particularly those from rural areas, often have little opportunity to be employed outside the household prior to marriage. They also tend to be married at a younger age than better educated and urban women. Most work within the household and/or on family farms. They would be even more isolated and "protected" than other groups of women, both before and after marriage. Thus, the illiterate respondents who had worked after marriage but not before were all migrants from rural areas working as *bawabāt* with their husbands, who were *bawabīn* (live-in security guards for apartment buildings) in Cairo.

Thus, even though there are contradictory social norms regarding the appropriateness of women working before marriage as well as after marriage, factors such as social class, education, student status, age, and parental status remain salient in explaining women's participation in the paid labor market. Furthermore, the husband's willingness to allow his wife to work would be the deciding factor for most women.

Other extremely important factors affecting a woman's opportunity to be employed are her proximity to the place of employment and her access to more expensive modes of transportation. If a woman does not live within walking distance of her workplace, transportation becomes a major barrier to employment. Transportation in Cairo is extremely difficult, even for rich people who have new, air-conditioned cars. Traffic jams are the norm, so travelling by road, whether in a car, taxi, van, or bus, is extremely slow and aggravating. Commuter subway trains are very fast, but routes only serve the north-south corridor along the east bank of the Nile. Walking is often the fastest mode of transportation, but is also hazardous: cars often drive over the narrow sidewalks, and extreme crowding of pedestrians is common. Traffic accidents usually result in fatality for pedestrians. Thus, unless a woman's place of employment is close to her household, transportation becomes a major factor in her accepting or keeping employment. Variables such as social class, education, age, neighborhood of residence and of employment are significant in choice of transportation for women. This, in turn, may severely limit her opportunity for employment.

When respondents were asked which mode of transportation they preferred, thirty-two said that they preferred to drive their own car; ten preferred to take a taxi; three preferred to take the city bus; two preferred to get rides from their female relatives and/or friends; two preferred to take the metro (underground train); one preferred to take the micro-bus (van); and one preferred to walk.

None of the women with any higher education ever took public transportation of any kind (bus, mini-bus, van, train). The extremely crowded conditions and constant sexual harassment by men were the main reasons cited. They preferred to take their own cars or taxis rather than public transportation, whereas those with less education had less choice. Nevertheless, two women with primary education or less and two with some academic high school preferred to take a taxi rather than public transportation because they did not want to submit themselves to sexual harassment. It was not surprising to find that those women who did not own cars and refused to take public transportation were not employed, even if they had a university degree. They took taxis when absolutely necessary or rode in cars with relatives or friends. For all respondents, however, the problems posed by transportation were significant contributing factors in their decision about whether or not to be employed outside the household.[32]

Another important factor in whether a woman is employed is whether she has her own independent income. Because Egyptian men are solely responsible for the family finances, women are not expected to contribute to family expenditures. Nevertheless, women are entitled to own, buy, and sell property; own and manage business enterprises; and maintain their own income independently of their male kin and husbands. A distinction must be made between assets and income derived from inheritance and employment income or even earnings from self-employment. A woman could have income from any or all of these sources.

Forty-one respondents (80.4%) reported that they had their own money, independent of their fathers' or husbands' money, and 95.2% of them said they had control over their own money.[33] Ten (19.6%) respondents had no money of their own and so depended completely on their fathers or husbands.[34] Obviously, only those respondents from middle and upper class status had their own income independent from their husbands, usually both from their family of origin and from their own investments and/or employment. Those from the lower classes were not only less educated but had little in the way of family assets to provide them with any income. What little income they did have came from their own earnings.

Of those respondents with higher education, 82.9% had money of their own, of whom 77.1% had control over their own money. The reason given by the two respondents with higher education for not having control over their own income was that their husbands did not have sufficient income to run the household.[35] In fact, even though these women were professionals -- one had a master's degree in medicine and the other a Ph.D. in agriculture -- they felt compelled to donate virtually all of their own money to monthly household expenditures. This is a reflection of the high rate of inflation, low level of public sector salaries, and poor employment opportunities for all groups in Egypt today. Since imposition of the structural adjustment program by the World Bank-International Monetary Fund, economic conditions have worsened significantly for the middle class and even for many in the old upper-middle class elite who do not have foreign sources of income.

As with the respondents in this study, the very small percentage of Egyptian women who have any assets at all belong to the privileged upper-middle and upper classes. The vast majority of women, like men, have no assets because they belong to the impoverished lower and lower-middle classes. In terms of self-employment or employment, most women in this study, like most other Egyptian women, have been involved in some kind of income-generating activities, even if it is done within the household and/or by family members for subsistence. Women's work is particularly "invisible" and often unrewarded with monetary income, though it is really productive labor.

In theory, Egyptian women do not have to account for their property and/or income; nor do they have to account for how they use it. In practice, Egyptian men have had *de facto* control over their wives' property and income. Since the mid-1970's, however, with the depressed wages and rapidly rising cost of living in Egypt, it has become a necessity for most women to contribute to household expenditures, whether through earnings from employment, investment, or inheritance.

In summary, regardless of education, most respondents who contributed their own money to the household said that they did so due to economic necessity, because their husbands' salaries could not meet their household budget needs. Thus, whether married or not, women from nearly all social classes are under increasing pressure to contribute at least some of their own income towards household expenditures due to the inability of fathers and husbands to adequately support their families, reflecting the relatively new economic realities of depressed wages, high unemployment, and escalating cost of living. This constitutes a major violation of gender in Egyptian society, one that is resented deeply by both sexes, as indicated by the respondents.

C2b. Consequences of Women's Employment: Breakdown of Domestic Gender Roles

As discussed above, the majority of Egyptian women have always been engaged in productive labor, at least at the subsistence level, even if these activities have not been recognized as work, and consequently, unpaid. Nevertheless, it is also true that since the demise of the Pharaonic era, it is primarily poor women who labor, *albeit* that they constitute the vast majority of Egyptian women. Furthermore, their participation in public society is for the most part restricted to these subsistence economic activities. Privileged women, on the other hand, have occasionally participated in public society and, with few notable exceptions, they engaged poor women to do their domestic labor. Since the 1950's, not only has a greater proportion of women in all social classes vastly improved their level of educational achievement, they have also responded positively to the encouragement provided by the state to seek employment, particularly in the public sector. With the rise of the neo-patriarchal state attempting to wrestle control over women's rights from families and the subsequent integration of women at all levels of society, there has been a consequent weakening of gender roles, both in the public and private spheres. Having already discussed this phenomenon in the public sphere, we now turn to investigate its effects on the private sphere.

With the increased participation of married women in the paid labor force, it is clear that substantial changes would have to occur in terms of their duties as housewives, wives, and mothers. Despite legislation designed to accommodate women's family responsibilities with employment responsibilities in both the public and private sectors, there simply is not enough time for women to fulfill all their duties both at home and at work. Therefore, respondents were asked a series of questions to ascertain their ideas and their behavior concerning the actual work done by men and women within the private sphere of family life. Thus, men's gender roles become more salient here, since changes in women's gender roles affect men's gender roles. Specifically, respondents were asked about responsibility for providing household expenditures, family decision-making, child-care, use of nursery schools or day-care centers, and housework.

Financial responsibility for the family is entirely the man's responsibility in Egypt. It embodies the essence of masculinity and is, indeed, men's primary gender role. Therefore, it was not surprising that 66.7% of respondents agreed with this norm. Significantly fewer respondents with higher education (57.1%) held this opinion compared to 87.5% of those with less education, indicating a moderating influence of higher education on adherence to traditional gender beliefs and practices.

Nevertheless, amongst the respondents who believed that ideally men should support their families, 27.5% said that men can only contribute partially to household expenditures, because today it takes more than one income to adequately support a family. They were adapting to the changing economic conditions which made it necessary for women to contribute to family income. Nevertheless, they strongly believed that men should contribute most of the money and that women should contribute only a minor share. Taking education into account, 34.3% of all respondents with higher education gave this answer compared to only 12.5% of those with less education.

Contrary to most respondents, however, two who were university-educated said that they disagreed with this Egyptian social norm, believing instead that men and women should be equally responsible for household expenditures. They did, however, explain that such a position would not be accepted, even by their own husbands. Another university-educated respondent who was from an upper class family said that the woman should contribute both to the decision-making in the family and the financing of the household if she is able to do so, though she realized that this is contrary to the social norm.[36]

Those 42.9% of respondents with higher education who disagreed represent the recently changed social reality of middle class women having to contribute to family income out of economic necessity as well as their greater employment opportunities vis-à-vis less educated women. For the most part, however, these women did not believe this to be a good development; they would prefer that men support the family. Interestingly, age was not a salient factor. The fact that only three respondents truly believed that women should contribute to family income is indicative of the continuing strength of the social norm amongst the respondents that men should be entirely responsible for family finances. Thus, while respondents were aware of the discrepancy between their stated views and their actual behavior, they decried the socio-economic conditions which compelled them to violate basic gender roles.

Along with being financially responsible for the family, the respondents, like most Egyptian women, also believe that men are responsible for family decision-making (El-Messīrī, 1978a and b; Rugh, 1984). Traditionally, at least since the end of the Pharaonic era, men have been the head of the household, controlling both finances and decision-making. Since families have traditionally been extended, the eldest competent male was head. Often the head of the clan made decision about collective property and control of other clan assets. Although the number of nuclear family households has been increasing dramatically in urban areas since the mid-1970's, due primarily to labor migration from rural areas and increased desire and opportunity to live apart from extended kin, older kin continue to have significant influence over important life-cycle events such as birth, engagement, marriage, and death as well as over control of property. (Rugh, 1984)

As mentioned above, only three respondents presented serious opposition to the social norm of man as breadwinner. These women also believed in equal rights and responsibilities for both sexes, a position which is extremely radical in Egyptian society. These three women were university educated, but represented only 8.6% of respondents with higher education and only 5.9% of all respondents. The other 94.1% of respondents firmly believed that women should respect the decisions of their fathers or husbands as the head of the household. The only exception allowed by these latter respondents would be if a woman believed that decision(s) taken by a man were immoral or unacceptable from the point of view of religious values. In such a case, the woman would have a moral duty to oppose an immoral decision. Except for the three dissenters, however, the respondents did not anticipate that they would ever face such a situation. Therefore, they were content to accept the authority of men.

Child-care is a domestic responsibility which is very time-consuming for women. Traditionally, child-care has been completely the responsibility of women, at least since late Pharaonic times. As many respondents lamented, Egyptian men do not consider caring for children to be a masculine activity, and certainly not part of their gender role. Even when divorcing their wives, men entrust the care of their children to women, whether their ex-wives, mothers, mothers-in-law, or other wives, though mothers usually retain custody of young children, as discussed above. Nurturing is itself the essence of the feminine gender role. Nevertheless, with more extended families being dislocated through migration in search of better employment opportunities, along with more married women being employed outside the household, it is becoming almost impossible for many women to provide adequate child-care for their children. Hence, there is more pressure on men to look after their children, at least for short periods of time until the women return home.

The fact that 86.3% of respondents said that men should look after their own children at least sometimes is indicative of the difficulty women have meeting all their gender role obligations despite extreme pressure to do so, and hence, the widespread necessity of men's involvement in child-care. Only 11.8% of respondents said that men should never take care of their own children. One dissenting respondent said that men should have equal responsibility with their wives for taking care of their children, but this was considered completely unacceptable by all the other respondents.

Age was not a salient factor in explaining respondents' views; however, whether the respondent had children of her own as well as the respondent's education were salient. Only 12.5% of the childless respondents believed that men should never look after their own children.[37] Likewise, while 31.3% of respondents with no higher education believed that men should never take care of their children, only one respondent with higher education agreed.[38] The effect of education on beliefs about child-care is evident in the fact that 75% of respondents with higher education felt that men should sometimes care for their own children, whereas only 25% of those with less education agreed.[39]

There was some variability amongst the respondents in terms of their rationale for men's involvement in child-care. While some genuinely believed that men should care for their children sometimes because it would improve their relationship as father with their children, others also believed that it would improve their spousal relationship and/or relieve the stress of living far from extended kin. A few respondents explained that while it might be an ideal for working couples if the man shared more than some of the child-care duties, that this would not be socially acceptable in Egypt, and hence, not an option. Most, however, believed that child-care is a "menial" task better done by female relatives and/or servants; that it is simply a waste of time for men.

The one respondent who believed that men and women should have equal responsibility for child-care was in her mid-thirties, had never married, and was reluctant to marry because she did not believe that she would be able to find a man who would share her values. She was studying for her master's degree and was from a middle class, Coptic Christian family. Her view was unusual even among the women with higher education. It would also be considered a radical view anywhere in the world, let alone Egypt because it represents a major violation of the masculine gender role as well as neglect of women's duties. Most women in Egypt would consider the wife to be a "criminal" (*mughrimah*) if she made her husband look after the children half of the time. Most women would consider that such a wife was abdicating her responsibilities if her husband shared in child-care activities. It would be interpreted that the wife "wears the pants", "acts like a man" and that the man is not a "real" man. In fact, many of the respondents who said that men should take care of their children sometimes made such comments about women who did not take care of their children most of the time. For them, it is entirely the woman's responsibility to care for children, though men can be called upon for very short-term, extraordinary situations until a woman is available.

Nursery schools and day-care centers are common in Egypt, but tend to be avoided if possible because of the social stigma attached to having children cared for outside the household. These services are free for the poor; but unless a woman was quite desperate, she would not use it because it would identify her as a poor, desperate woman in need of charity. The middle class prefers to send their children to private schools which are generally quite expensive. If the nursery school or day-care is run by educated people, and particularly if they expose the child to English or French, middle class parents are more inclined to send their young children. Upper class women may send their children to such a school, but would be more inclined to have a European or Filipina nanny living within the household to provide these services. Islamic fundamentalist groups have established day-care centers, usually attached to their own schools and usually free, for people who are willing to support their interpretation of Islam, particularly popular with the lower-middle class.

Because of the increased pressure experienced by Egyptian women to juggle workplace and domestic responsibilities, particularly child-care, and because of reluctance by fathers to accept child-care as a legitimate responsibility, the thirty-five respondents who had children were asked if their children had ever attended a nursery school or a day-care center. Their answers reflect the complex and changing reality women face regarding child-care: 57.1% had not, while 42.9% had utilized these child-care services. Education proved to be salient, since 55% of respondents with higher education sent their children to nursery school or day-care, while 18% of those with less education did so. These data support the social pattern of middle class women sending their children to day-care centers or nursery schools because they can afford to send their children to quality private schools, while poor women did not because they cannot afford it and because they did not want to suffer the social stigma of utilizing charity.

Another responsibility which has traditionally been central to women's gender role is that of doing housework. Housework constitutes the lowest status work of ordinary women, not only in Egypt, but in all patriarchal societies. It is unpaid and invisible, but women who do not maintain expected standards of housework are often severely punished by irate husbands and/or relatives, particularly mothers-in-law. Only a very tiny percentage of Egyptian women can afford washing machines, which are usually the old-fashioned semi-automatic ones with wringers. Upper-middle and upper class women have small, European-style automatic washing machines with their own internal water heater. Even fewer Egyptian women have other household machines and gadgets to reduce the labor-intensity and drudgery of housework. Most Egyptian women, for instance, cook on a Bunsen burner, do their laundry by hand, and have only cold water. Cooking is very laborious and time-consuming: food is fresh but unprocessed and dirty, and small animals must be cleaned, plucked and/or skinned.

Reflecting the increased incidence of nuclear family households and/or women's employment outside the household, it was not surprising that most respondents recognized the necessity of husbands helping with housework. Thus, 70.6% of respondents said that husbands should do some housework,[40] while 25.5% supported the social norm that men never do housework. Two respondents believed that husbands should share housework equally with their wives.[41]

Education was the most salient variable. This was particularly noticeable in the distinction between those who supported the traditional norm of men never doing housework and those who disagreed. Only 14.3% of respondents with higher education supported the traditional norm, compared to 50% of those with less education. Exposure to higher education seems to have a liberating effect on women's attitudes towards men's responsibility for housework.

It is clear that more respondents were more opposed to men doing housework than child-care. Nevertheless, 70% of respondents believed that men should do some housework and also that they should take care of their children sometimes. Clearly, those who held more traditional views as well as those who held more progressive views constituted a minority of respondents.[42]

From this, it would appear that Egyptian women are expecting men to do at least some housework, which is a major deviation from the traditional social norm. Most of the respondents commented that most middle class Egyptian men do housework, but that they would never let it be known outside the household and that men would never discuss this with other men as it is still considered a major violation of their gender role. Even some husbands who gladly helped their wives within the household were concerned that their male friends might consider that their wives "wear the pants" if they were to know about this.

The respondents said that men do housework and child-care out of necessity. Most middle class families no longer can afford to have servants to do all the required work. Most of the respondents were involved in some sort of subsistence work, whether for pay or not, and they simply did not have the time or energy to do everything themselves. Couples tended to have their own accommodation so that families no longer live solely within extended family households. Thus, there are less people around to share the work. Couples also often live far from their relatives now, so that relatives cannot drop in to help out as often as they did before. Finally, consumerism has taken hold in Egypt, and people spend more money on household appliances, furniture, electronics, cars, more fashionable clothing, socializing in private country clubs, and so on, which raises the standard people hold for lifestyle and standard of living, but leaves less money for servants. Thus, the type and amount of work which is now done within the household is more taxing on women given their other responsibilities. The end result is that more men are doing housework and child-care, whether or not they are willing to acknowledge it to others outside the household.

C2c. Employment: Conclusion

Despite the social and cultural barriers, most Egyptian women are engaged in productive labor, whether officially recorded as such or not (Abdel-Fadil, 1980; Anker and Anker, 1989). While the vast majority of them are uneducated and have always worked out of economic necessity, the more educated have generally had more choices. The household and family duties of women are extensive and exhaustive. For most, employment outside the household is an additional burden they would rather not have. Some well-educated women who have professional occupations, however, find that working outside the household provides an opportunity to develop their skills, engage in interesting work, and escape some of the drudgery and isolation of the household. They can delegate many of their household duties to servants.[43]

Until the 1950's, educated women were not welcomed in the labor force, particularly the public sector. Integration of women into the labor force and participation in public life were important gains for women as well as indicative of the push for democratization which characterized the Nāsir regime. Educated women were able to work because they wanted to, not because they had to. Furthermore, travel abroad by Egyptian women and/or their fathers and/or husbands has influenced their gender identity and social roles, particularly regarding employment. With the severe deterioration of the economy since the mid-1970's, however, increased pressure on women to contribute to family income meant that many educated women who wished to remain at home felt compelled to work. Today, even some upper-middle class women are employed because their family incomes are not sufficient to support their life-styles.

Permission from a woman's male guardian is necessary in order for her to leave the household, and a woman's employment is generally considered to be shameful for her father or husband, since the father's/husband's success as a man is measured by how well he supports his family. Although these traditional, patriarchal beliefs remain dominant, today they are being breached by many Egyptians due to economic necessity. In addition, Egyptians are now very reluctant to work as servants, and the increasing difficulty of middle class Egyptians to afford servants means that many educated women are employed but would prefer not to work so that they can better manage their families and households. Just getting to work and back women must endure many burdens and barriers: it is time-consuming; the sexual harassment is common and humiliating; travel is slow and exhausting, etc. Those women who have independent incomes, whether they are employed or not, are also facing increased pressure to contribute towards household expenditures. For some women with their own income, employment is still a necessity because family earnings are unable to keep up with inflation and families have to find new sources of income to maintain their standard of living. The factors affecting women's employment in Egypt are many. While women have their own individual reasons for earning an income or not, there are many social factors which influence women to act in ways which they otherwise would not.

IV. Generational Differences: The Respondents and Their Mothers

The preceding analyses indicate the effects of education and class on the respondents' conceptualization of gender and its importance in determining gender roles, as well as the importance of a number of demographic variables. In addition, changing socio-economic conditions in Egyptian society have also been important in shaping both the ideas and the behavior of women. Because of the close relationship between mothers and daughters as well as the relatively rigid gender distinctions between men and women, mothers have a significant influence on daughters' beliefs and behavior.

Therefore, respondents were asked to identify what they believed to be the main gender-shaping influences in their lives. Not surprisingly, 88% of respondents cited more than one source of influence on their conceptualization of gender. General life experiences was identified by 76.5% of the respondents, religion by 64.7%, and their mother by 52%. The mass media was cited by 29.4% of respondents, the school by 27.5%, university attendance by 23.5%, friends by 25.5%, family or relatives by 15.7%, and reading by 3.9%. Thus, more than half of the respondents believed that general life experiences, followed by religion and mother influenced their own conceptualization of gender most. Influences of mothers on respondents was also investigated through other questions addressed to the respondents, as discussed below.

Because Egyptian women are expected to spend most of their time working with their mothers in or around the household, the influence of mothers on daughters is great. Daughters are also expected to look after their elderly parents, so the nature of the relationship between mother and daughter is not only particularly close, but also life-long. Given the very different socio-economic circumstances of life during the life-time of respondents and their mothers, respondents were asked a number of questions to ascertain how their mothers conceptualized gender and what social roles their mothers actually enacted. Much insight was gained about gender identity and gender roles in Egypt through a comparison of respondents and their mothers.

In exploring the conceptualization of gender held by respondents and their mothers, respondents were asked if their mothers believed that both sexes should have equal responsibilities and equal rights. "Equal" here is used to mean "same". This would be a radical idea in Egypt, since traditionally men and women have very different, mutually exclusive responsibilities and rights based on an essentialist notion of gender which is reinforced by religion for Jews, Christians, and Muslims alike.[44] As respondents explained, most Egyptians believe that men and women have different rights and responsibilities, though many would also see them as complementary and socially equal. Thus, it was not surprising that 92% of respondents said that their mothers did not believe in equality of the sexes (having the same rights and responsibilities.) Most respondents themselves also accepted the traditional views expressed by their mothers, that men and women have different but complementary rights and responsibilities, as delineated in terms of gender roles. They believed that this has significant implications for social roles.

Only four of the respondents had mothers who believed that men and women do or should have equal rights and equal responsibilities. These mothers were not only well educated, but also upper class. All had either travelled abroad or had close relatives who did and were strongly influenced by liberal European values. Nevertheless, these mothers as well as their daughters, believed that equality of the sexes is indigenous to Egyptian culture, Islamic as well as pre-Islamic, and not an imported Western idea.[45]

Because of the significant difference in education and life experience between most respondents and their mothers, respondents were asked if they believed that their own concept of gender was similar to that held by their mothers. Most (54.9%) respondents believed that their own concept of gender differed from that of their mothers; 27.5% believed that it was similar; and 17.6% saw both similarities and differences between their own conceptualization of gender and that of their mothers.

In explaining the similarities and differences in the conceptualization of gender between respondents and their mothers, the complex interplay between people's beliefs and the dilemmas of real life situations was revealed. Some of the responses reflected a greater adherence to traditional roles, while others reflected a much more modern view in terms of questioning the necessity for marriage, appropriateness of employment before and/or after marriage, and traditional concepts of women's gender roles. One woman with a bachelor degree, for instance, explained that while her mother was employed outside the household out of economic necessity, she herself was not because the family was able to live on her husband's salary. While both mother and daughter believed that women should not be employed, the mother was not able to realize this in her own life, whereas the daughter was. This belief that wives should stay at home and husbands should be solely responsible for supporting the family is the traditional social norm in Egypt even though it has always been an unrealizable one for the majority of Egyptians. An example of the opposite, of the woman working before marriage while the mother did not, was the case for two university-educated women. For more affluent and well-educated Egyptian women, this pattern of work before marriage presents a break with tradition in post-1952 Egypt. Although this has been established as the social norm for at least thirty years, it is now being challenged by the Islamic fundamentalists as not gender-appropriate.

As might be expected, education had an effect on respondents' ideas about gender. Respondents with higher education were more likely to believe that their concept of gender was different from that of their mothers, indicating that higher education has somewhat of a liberating effect on women's conceptualization of gender identity and gender roles.

The fact that half of the respondents with no higher education had mothers who were illiterate, while only one of the respondents with some higher education had an illiterate mother would mean that the influence of tradition on the latter group was less strong even before they were educated. The effect of education on role conceptions probably develops over several generations. In other words, the educational level of the mothers as well as that of the respondents themselves has a bearing on the role conceptions of the women interviewed. Because some of the respondents with no higher education were older, elite high school-educated women and some of the younger university-educated respondents were from lower-middle and middle class families, age and social class are also salient factors influencing women's ideas about gender identity and gender roles.

In comparing the actual gender roles of the respondents with those of their mothers, 35.3% were very similar, if not identical; 49% respondents reported that their actual gender roles were **not** similar to those of their mothers; and 15.7% explained that there were both similarities and differences between their gender roles and those of their mothers. As was the case regarding the conceptualization of gender, the complex interplay between people's beliefs and the reality of everyday life meant that some respondents enacted roles which they did not see as ideally gender-appropriate.

The more education a respondent had, the less likely it was that her actual gender roles were similar to those of her mother, indicating that higher education may have a broadening effect on the roles women play. It is also likely related to the greater opportunities open to women in Egyptian society now compared to those afforded their mothers. Nevertheless, while most of these respondents explained that their ideas were more liberal than those of their mothers, this does not mean that their actual gender roles were, in fact, more broad. This is due to the fact that employment is still considered at best an option and at worst an economic necessity, ideally less important than marriage and motherhood.

Responses were the most complex amongst those eight women whose gender roles were both similar and different from those of their mothers. For instance, four respondents reported that on the whole, both their conceptualization of gender and their actual gender roles were similar to those of their mothers; however, they were employed before marriage whereas their mothers were not because their mothers had far less opportunity to pursue education and employment. Nevertheless, these respondents had quit their employment or planned to do so either when married or when pregnant. Thus, these respondents would be less traditional than their mothers in their actual gender role enactment, but within the norm for women's gender roles in post-1952 Egyptian society.

Two other respondents reported that their actual gender roles were similar to those of their mothers, but that their mothers were employed full-time whereas the respondents were employed part-time. These women were university-educated and could afford to work part-time, unlike their mothers. Nevertheless, their choice of part-time work makes them more traditional in their actual gender roles, since the main reason they cited was to spend more time at home caring for children and running the household. The most traditional position was expressed by yet another university-educated respondent who was not employed prior to nor after marriage because her husband was a reliable breadwinner. In contrast, despite her father's two professional occupations, her university-educated mother had been employed full-time in a professional occupation both prior to and after marriage due to economic necessity and as a result of divorce. Thus, these three respondents were somewhat more traditional than their mothers in their actual gender role enactment.

Even amongst the most traditional stratum of society, that of the *Sa 'īdī* peasants, there are some startling differences between mothers and daughters, as evidenced by one such illiterate respondent who reported that while her actual gender roles were similar to those of her mother, unlike her mother, she was much more questioning of tradition and was more flexible and liberal in both her ideas and her behavior. Therefore, unlike her mother who remained secluded inside the household in a remote village in Upper Egypt, the daughter moved to Cairo with her husband and children and went out freely in public, alone. This respondent was glad that both her husband and her chosen environment gave her much more freedom of choice than that of her family of origin and its social environment.

The answers given by respondents regarding differences between their actual gender roles and those of their mothers formed a continuum from extreme patriarchal Islamic and/or Arab traditionalism to Western modernity. For some, the difference in role enactment between mother and daughter was considered a positive development, whereas for others, it was lamentable. For some respondents, whether they were employed or not, women's employment was a despicable twist of fate, while for others it was a valued choice. Overall, there remains a significant difference between the gender roles of women with higher education and those with less education, indicating that higher education has a broadening, if not liberating, effect on women's actual gender roles.

Respondents were asked if their ideas about gender had changed since they were adolescents in order to determine the rigidity of their thinking as well as to determine what influences were significant in shaping these ideas. Only two respondents said that their ideas had not changed at all; 39.2% said that their ideas had changed slightly; and 56.9% said that their ideas about gender had changed a great deal since adolescence.

The two women who had not changed their ideas about gender were the most rigid of the respondents in terms of their thinking and clung to a very narrow literalist and fundamentalist interpretation of Islam. Most respondents had changed a great deal since they were adolescents. It was evident that exposure to higher education and more varied life experiences were significant influences on respondents' conceptualization of gender, along with age, social class, and their mothers' influence. Clearly, most respondents ideas about gender were not static.

V. Conclusion

The lives of ordinary women in Egypt have been substantially affected by a number of social, economic, and political factors, beyond the control of most Egyptians. The essentialist conceptualization of gender, reflected in the complementarity of gender identity and gender roles, is strongly rooted in Islam but also in Judaism and Christianity throughout the Middle East. Nevertheless, there are many factors which have influenced the beliefs and behavior of ordinary Egyptians, particularly women. The respondents in this study have voiced their own conceptualization of gender and compared it to that of their mothers. Furthermore, they discussed their frustration in trying to fulfill their gender roles in the face of very difficult circumstances. In fact, many have found that they have had to make major accommodations to their gender identity or live with the dissonance of having to violate their gender roles on a daily basis.

Until very recently, it was somewhat of a truism to say that an Egyptian woman either employed a servant or worked as a servant. The gulf between the classes is extreme and there are few options for uneducated women. Well-educated women had more choices and could afford to devote themselves to fulfilling their domestic roles without violating their gender identity. Strong social proscription of women's social roles makes it difficult for even the most educated and most Westernized of women to resist, let alone violate. The husband's right to control his wife's behavior, including her social roles, is a strongly entrenched Semitic cultural trait common to Egyptians of all religions (B. 'Ibrahīm, *et al.*, 1997). Nevertheless, there seems to be a growing dissatisfaction with this norm, particularly amongst women with higher education. Respondents made it very clear that education was highly valued by all Egyptian women because it provided greater opportunities for social mobility and gave them greater choices in life. Furthermore, the dire economic circumstances of most Egyptians has compelled many to violate these norms. This results in a great deal of confusion as well as conflict. It means that women are not able to adequately fulfill the domestic duties central to their gender roles; it often means that men are also unable to be adequate breadwinners which is central to their gender role. The fact that men are now having to perform domestic duties has further blurred the distinction between gender identities and gender roles for men and women.

Even though women have greater access to education and are now earning an income, there is great resistance to women's employment. This reflects the tension between gender identity and the ability of individuals to maintain their gender roles in everyday life. Furthermore, despite the fact that the neo-patriarchal state has ratified many international treaties guaranteeing human and civil rights for women and children, the state is unable or unwilling to implement them due to extreme opposition by the majority of Egyptian men from all social classes and social groups (Jenefsky, 1991). Opposition to the 1979 reform of the Personal Status Laws made it abundantly clear that the government would have to walk a narrow, winding path balancing the demands of its citizens which span a diverse range of views from militant, radical Islamic fundamentalists to modern Western-oriented secularists. Women are caught between their own confusion about gender, control by male guardians, an authoritarian state, and the realities of trying to survive in everyday life.

Chapter Seven End Notes

1

Although this chapter presents the data provided by respondents and informants, others have discussed the lack of progress of family planning campaigns in Egypt and other Middle Eastern countries as well as the lack of understanding by medical personnel of the poor people who are targetted. For instance, see Sayigh (1981).

2

The Arab Republic of Egypt Ministry of Education reported that in 1986, 49% of the population of Egypt is illiterate; however, 37% of men and 63% of women are illiterate (ARE MOE, 1992:93).

3

See Gellner and Waterbury (1977), Hansen (1991b), and Reeves (1990).

4

'Abdallah (1988), ARE MOE (1992), Korayem (1987), UNICEF (1993), and World Bank (1991:xv).

5

The older elite, particularly women, had completed high school whereas the middle and upper-middle class had at least some university education. Thus, "educated" in Egypt is not simply related to one's level education but also class.

6

A limited number of special government experimental schools for the gifted exist at both the preparatory and high school levels in Cairo. Students who have very high grades at the end of primary school may be put into these preparatory schools for the gifted (*al-madāris an-namūzagīyah*), and/or those with high grades at the end of the regular government preparatory schools may be put into these schools for the gifted at the high school level. Basically, it is like a program for gifted children in Canada. In many cases, this means that one or two particular classes within a school are streamed into the gifted program (*al-madrasah an-namūzagīyah*), but in some cases they actually go to a school for the gifted (*al-madrasah an-namūzagīyah*) which has its own building.

Although, in theory, entrance to *al-madrasah an-namūzagīyah* is meritocratic, that is, open to all on the basis of achievement, in reality, it is primarily those from the middle class who attend, since they are more likely to have encouragement from home as well as parents who are able to provide tutoring and/or money to pay for tutoring which is usually necessary to reach this level of achievement.

7

Young, middle class women are also more likely to marry a man from a higher class if they are university-educated and are working in a prestigious profession, even though they often give up employment after marriage. The university degree(s) and professional status constitute status and prestige which partially compensate for the lower status of their family of origin.

8

Arabic as a written language is a dead language (classical Arabic, or *fusḥā*), artificially constructed in pre-Islamic times to enable rival Arab tribes to display their poetry at festivals. These tribes spoke different vernacular dialects of Arabic, none of which were written. Written Arabic (*fusḥā*) was essentially fossilized with the recording of the *Qur'ān* in the eight century. Since then, this form has remained the ideal for written Arabic, though vernacular dialects (*'āmmīyah*) continue to deviate significantly from each other as well as from written, classical Arabic. (For a detailed discussion about the regional differences in Arabic dialects, see 'Abd-al-'Al (1971), Altoma (1957 and 1970/74), Bakri (1972), Belkin (1964), Ben 'Abdallah (1964 and 1965), Cachia (1967), Cadora (1966), Cowan (1960), Faysal (1952), Ferguson (1959), Kaye (1970), Mitchell (1982), 'Omar (1974), Robertson (1970), Schmidt (1974), and Schultz (1981).

The *Qur'ān* is recited in the classical Arabic of the written text, privileging classical Arabic as the language of God and the highly educated. Despite the subsequent fall in status and power of the original Arabic speakers of the Arabian Peninsula, the Arabic language itself remains highly regarded and privileged throughout the Middle East because of its centrality to Islam ('Abūhamdia, 1988:41). It continues to function as a unifying force in the Arab world through its links to the civilization which flourished during the Golden Age of Islam (*Ibid.*). Native Arabic speakers must undergo years of formal study to master the reading and writing of classical Arabic. Thus, mastery of classical Arabic is one of the markers of a well-educated person, not only in Egypt, but throughout the Middle East and the Muslim world. It is commonly asserted by the elites that vernacular dialects are degenerative forms of classical Arabic. In fact, the British have been accused of exploiting vernacular differences in Arabic to divide and rule during the colonial era by discouraging the development of a modern standard written Arabic ('Abd-al-Mawla, 1980; Qasem, 1982).

Interestingly, Armbrust (1996:228) refers to Pierre Cachia's (1967:20-21) quotations of two prominent Egyptians, Nobel laureate writer Naguib Mahfouz and 'Alī an-Najdī Nāsif, professor at *Dār al-'Ulūm*, the Teachers' Training College now attached to Cairo University. Mahfouz said that "the colloquial [language] is one of the diseases from which the people are suffering" and 'Alī an-Najdī Nāsif said that "the colloquial is the *protégée* of ignorance and imperialism together."

This tradition of privileging classical Arabic (*fushā*) over the vernacular (*'āmmīyah*) in both written and spoken form is referred to as *'usūlī* (traditionalist/conformist) and it still predominates in Egypt, though it is opposed by those *tajāwuzī*, (transgressing/non-conformist) who prefer a more modernist, secularist approach to language which would privilege the vernacular and make it the basis of the written word (Armbrust, 1996:228).

The reality is that the majority of native Arabic speakers are barely literate in classical Arabic, and a new standard for written Arabic used in newspapers and most books has been developed since the 1960's, referred to as "modern standard written Arabic" (MSA), also referred to as "modern newspaper Arabic", which simplifies classical Arabic and includes some vocabulary from the vernacular dialects. It remains, however, a written, not a spoken form of Arabic. Its status is decidedly inferior to that of classical Arabic, but has been widely used by the middle class as a practical compromise. The illiterate and poorly educated, of course, remain ignorant of "modern standard written Arabic".

There are widely divergent views amongst scholars of the Arabic language as to how different the vernaculars really are, particularly how mutually intelligible they are to native speakers. Attitudes towards Arabic speakers in other social classes as well as in other regions are also often a significant factor in determining intelligibility of the spoken language ('Abūhamdia, 1988); hence, some scholars believe that differences amongst the vernacular dialects of Arabic have been exaggerated (*Ibid.*). Trudgill (1979:10, cited in 'Abūhamdia, 1988:51) even goes as far as asserting that "[u]nity in standard Arabic is unmatched in other languages." Nevertheless, in practice native Arabic speakers usually have difficulty understanding others who speak a regional dialect different from their own.

The vernacular dialect spoken in the Cairo region is the most removed from classical Arabic as well as from other vernacular dialects. In this dialect, several letters are omitted (not pronounced), some are replaced with a glottal stop, and the sounds of many letters are not only changed, but are almost indistinguishable. This Cairo dialect was adopted by the broadcasting media in Egypt, though not by the print media. It is primarily because of the imperialist domination of Arabic mass media by Nāsir and his successors that other Arabs can understand Cairenes. The entertainment industries also use primarily Cairo dialect, further dominating Arabic mass media throughout the Middle East. Furthermore, most Cairenes have difficulty understanding Egyptians from other regions of the country as well as people from other Arab states. Though there are distinct several vernacular dialects of Arabic spoken in Egypt which are distinctly regional and/or particular to certain ethnic groups, Cairene Arabic, as the language of the imperial center, marginalizes all of them in Egyptian society. It is not coincidental that people in the *Sa'īd* (Upper Egypt) call Cairo "*Maṣr*", "Egypt". Therefore, the caliber of Arabic spoken as well as the caliber of Arabic written by an Egyptian is indicative of the person's level of educational achievement, region, social status, and class. It is crucial to identity.

9

Twenty-nine (56.9%) of the respondents employed servants in their households and ten other women (19.6%) lived with their parents, who employed servants. Not surprisingly, 84.6% of these women had higher education and the other 15.4% were six older women from upper class families who had attended elite high schools. Those with more education were younger and/or from middle class rather than upper class families.

Only twelve respondents (23.5%) did not employ servants. As might be expected, this included the seven respondents who had never attended high school, and who, in fact had very little education. Most of their mothers were illiterate. Interestingly, only two respondents with some higher education did not employ servants. This is because they were the only members of their families with higher education. One woman was married and the other was single, but both of their families of origin and the one's family of procreation can be characterized as lower-middle class. Both were the only members of their families who were well educated and they exemplify the increasingly common gap in education amongst family members in this social stratum. Thus, while it is generally true that education is a reflection of social class, this is not always the case. Social class is obviously a better variable for explaining which respondents employed servants.

10

Of the thirty-nine women who employed at least one servant, thirty-eight (97.4%) women employed a woman as a cleaner for their households and a man (and usually his family) as a *bawāb* to guard their buildings. Seven (17.9%) women employed a cook; two (5.1%) women employed a driver, and one woman employed a woman as a babysitter. Thus, twenty-nine women (74.4%) employed both a *bawāb* and a cleaner; five (12.8%) employed a *bawāb*, a cleaner, and a cook; one employed only a *bawāb*; one employed only a cleaner; one employed a *bawāb*, a cleaner, and a driver; one employed a *bawāb*, a cleaner, a cook, and a driver; and one woman employed a *bawāb*, a cleaner, a cook, and a babysitter.

Of the eight women who employed three or more different servants, all had at least one university degree except one upper class woman who had an academic French high school education. They also all spent more than £E 1,000 per month on household expenditures. In fact, four of the eight spend more than £E 2,000 per month. This would represent a rather lavish level of life-style in Egypt.

11

Of these thirty-eight ever-married respondents, thirty-four had been married only once, and four had been married twice. Thirty were married at the time of the interviews, three were divorced, and five were widowed.

12

All marriages in Egypt are conducted on the basis of a written contract signed by the groom and the bride's father or another male relative acting on his behalf. It is not necessary, and not even common, for the bride to sign the contract. The marriage contract contains details of the *mahr* and all financial details regarding the engagement, marriage, and requirements should the marriage end in divorce. This contract is binding not only on the marriage partners, but on their families of origin.

13

Women are not allowed to be judges in Egypt. See also Fluehr-Lobban and Bardsley-Sirois (1990), Jenefsky (1991), Sonbol (1996)

14

The interaction of salient variables such as age, social class, education, travel, and marital status was particularly noticeable amongst the nine respondents in their fifties. Only one believed that women should have the right to divorce clause included in the marriage contract. She was a widow, from an upper-middle class family, had earned two university degrees in the U.S.A., and had worked as a professional in the Middle East and Africa for twenty-two years. Five of the eight who disagreed were also from upper-middle class families and held university degrees and professional jobs, two of whom had worked in the Middle East, and one of whom had earned her Ph.D. in the U.S.A. Two others were from elite families and had a high school education, and one was illiterate. All eight held an essentialist notion of gender and believed that the husband was literally the head of the household. In this sense, they were more conservative than the dissenting woman, even though all but one of them was very familiar and even comfortable with most other aspects of Western culture.

Amongst the eight respondents who were in their forties, all were married and only two did not believe that women should have the right to divorce clause in their marriage contracts. One was a university-educated professional who was highly religious and very conservative and the other was high school educated, less conservative socially and religiously but traditional in terms of believing that men are the head of the household. Both had happy marriages. All but one of the six women who supported the right to divorce clause had higher education, and one had some high school. All except one had travelled abroad. Three were from upper-middle class families and three were from elite upper class families. Two were trapped in unhappy marriages.

The only two respondents in their seventies believed that women should have the right to divorce clause in their marriage contracts. The one who supported this unconditionally was highly educated, well travelled, and was from an elite family, while the other had only some preparatory education and was from a lower-middle class family. The latter supported this right only for "certain people under certain conditions". Both were widowed for many years and lived independently of kin. Perhaps this is why they were very liberal in their views by Egyptian standards, and particularly so given their age.

Only two respondents were in their sixties. One was an elderly, twice divorced elite woman with high school education who opposed the divorce clause and the other was an illiterate, divorced woman who was uncertain about its acceptability in Islam, though she said she would support it if it was possible.

Younger respondents presented a much more complex pattern. In fact, the younger they were, the less they were in favor of the right to divorce clause. While seven of the twelve respondents in their thirties supported this right, five did not and one was uncertain. All five who opposed it were married, two had university degrees, one had high school, and the other two were illiterate. All but one of those who supported it had higher education and the other had high school; four of the seven were single and the other three were happily married. Ironically, the one who was uncertain had all her education, including master's degree, abroad and was from the most elite family.

Of the fourteen respondents in their twenties, nine opposed the right to divorce clause, one was uncertain, and only three supported it. Six of the nine opposing respondents had higher education, one had high school, and the other two were illiterate. Five were from upper-middle class families, two were from the lower-middle class, and two were from the lowest class. Four of the five single respondents were engaged, and four were happily married. Those who supported the right to divorce clause all had higher education as did the elite, married woman who was uncertain. Three of the women supporting this right were single and the other was married and all came from upper-middle class families.

Only two women were younger than twenty: an eighteen year old, middle class engaged university student opposed the right to divorce clause while a sixteen year old, lower-middle class high school student supported it. The former was from a very religious, conservative family. While the younger one was also from a relatively conservative, religious family, her mother and most of her adult kin were illiterate and she was determined to have more choices in life, and hence, to rise above the lower-middle class.

15

Nine of these respondents had given a different response regarding voluntary inclusion of this clause: four fully supported the voluntary inclusion of the right to divorce in the marriage contract, three had supported it only for certain people under certain circumstances, and two had been uncertain about it.

16

While three respondents had been uncertain about voluntary inclusion of the right to divorce in the marriage contract, four gave this response regarding such a secular law. It is important to note here, that only one of these four had given the same response to the previous query. Thus, two respondents who had unconditionally supported the previous right while another who had given a somewhat contradictory answer that women and men should be subject to the same rules but that the right to divorce should be given in only a few circumstances were uncertain about guaranteeing it this secular law. Clearly, these respondents were less willing to support such a secular law if it violated the principles of Islam. Likewise, they were unwilling to support the proposed law if it made women more vulnerable to men's wrath.

17

All twelve respondents supporting this idea had at least one university degree. Six were single. Five of these single women were Muslim and all feared becoming trapped in an unhappy marriage. One elderly woman had been widowed and living independently for many years, was well educated and had worked in the West. Of the five married women, two were in their thirties, had travelled abroad, and were trapped in unhappy marriages. The other two were fifty, had travelled extensively, and were happily married. One was upper-middle class and the other from an elite family.

18

The exact age at which daughters and sons are transferred from the mother's custody to the father is not specified in the *Qur'ān*, and are, hence, subject to interpretation by the four schools (*madhāhib*) of jurisprudence in Islam. Here, we are using the ages specified by the *Ḥanafī* school, since it is the dominant one in Egypt.

19

Historically, it appears that the more affluent the family, the more likely that males would gain custody of children after separation or divorce, and conversely, that the poorer the family, the more likely the woman would have custody. This is most likely related to the resources available to support children. Poorer men would prefer to remarry and spend their meager resources on their new family, rather than their previous family. (Meriwether, 1996)

20

See *Qur'ān, Sūrah* IV: Verse 34. See also Fluehr-Lobban and Bardsley-Sirois (1990) and Sonbol (1996a).

21

Twenty-six (51%) respondents said, "Yes, women can choose their social roles so long as the husband agrees"; one said, "Yes, but the husband and wife must agree without coercion"; three said, "Yes, but the activities must be decent and gender appropriate, whether inside or outside the household"; four said, "No, because the woman may freely choose her social roles without her husband's permission, and her husband should not oppose her"; and five said, "No, because the woman may freely choose her social roles and her husband's permission is not required."

22

It is important to note that the five respondents who answered uncertain to some of these questions explained that these matters are addressed by Islam, but that they could not remember the proscribed behavior. Therefore, they felt it best to reply uncertain. They made it clear that whatever was proscribed by Islam must be followed and was acceptable to them.

23

This respondent was single, though she had been engaged at least twice. She was in her thirties, lived with her parents, was high school-educated, worked full-time as a secretary for a private company, and was very pessimistic about finding a suitable husband.

24

Of the two respondents who opposed women being active in public life, one was illiterate and the other was an older elite woman who had completed academic high school. They expressed the traditional, patriarchal belief that the public sphere was the domain of men and that women belonged only in the private sphere of the household.

25

The Egyptian organizations in which some respondents were members included the following: The Women's Committee of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, the Scientific Organization for Women, Zaynab Ḥassan Kāmal, Lovers of Egypt, New Woman, My Daughter Society for Orphan Girls, the Egyptian Fertility Care Society, and a community development project organizing adolescent girls in a particularly disadvantaged district of Cairo. The two organizations belonged to by respondents which are chapters of Western international associations include the Rotary Club and the Zonta International Club.

26

Because of the close geographic and cultural proximity of other Middle Eastern countries, it was not surprising that almost all of the respondents who had travelled abroad had travelled to at least one Arab country. The religious significance of holy places in Sa'udi Arabia to Muslims and the economic opportunities available to Egyptians in the Arab Gulf states explain why all of the respondents without higher education who had travelled abroad and 82.8% of those with higher education who had travelled abroad, had travelled to the Arab countries. Thus, only 17.2% of respondents with higher education who had travelled abroad had not travelled to another Arab country; two of these respondents were Coptic Christians who were single and pursuing post-secondary studies, two were young, single professionals, and one was a young, married professional.

27

Twenty respondents travelled to the West, 58.8% of those who had ever travelled abroad, 52.9% of whom had higher education and the others had high school diplomas from elite foreign language schools. Furthermore, all of the respondents who travelled to the West were from upper-middle class and upper class families. In fact, one respondent owned an apartment on the Spanish riviera which she and her family used for holidays.

28

Five (31%) of the women with no post-secondary education employed servants and another respondent who lived with her parents reported that her parents employed servants. These respondents all had some academic high school and were from elite families. Twenty-three (65.7%) of the respondents with at least some higher education employed servants and another ten (28.6%) who lived with parents reported that their parents employed servants. Furthermore, respondents with higher education also employed more servants than those with less education. For instance, of those respondents with higher education, one employed a cook, babysitter, maid, and *bawāb* and another respondent employed a cook, maid, driver, and *bawāb*. Only one of the respondents who employed servant(s) did not employ a maid, having only a *bawāb*, and all the respondents who employed servant(s) employed a *bawāb*. Interestingly, two of the women with university degrees did not employ servants because of class: one was unmarried, living with her illiterate mother -- she was the only person in her family to attend university -- and the woman had married a tradesman with no higher education. These two women had experienced mobility in opposite directions: one from a low class family of origin who was trying to establish herself in the lower-middle to middle class and the other from a middle class family who had married into a lower to lower-middle class family.

In terms of monthly household living expenditures, none of the respondents spending less than £E500 employed servants, but all of the respondents spending £E 600 or more employed servants. The monthly salary for a full-time teacher in a government school is £E 180, in an elite private school is £E 500, and a university dean would earn £E 1,200. Respondents' monthly household expenditures ranged from £E 100 to £E 3,500.

29

The seven respondents who were no longer working provided these reasons: one was on a one year leave from a full-time job; two respondents had retired, one at middle age due to poor health; three had worked full-time previously but no longer wished to work, two because they had married and one because she became *muhaggabāt*; and one was on a one-year educational leave from her full-time job.

30

In terms of occupations, one woman was working as a domestic servant, and another as a street hawker; two were *bawābāt* (on-site security guard for apartment building), two were secretaries, and two were teachers in academic high schools. There was one different woman in each of the following occupations: hotel receptionist and translator, school social worker, Arabic teacher, high school principal, high school teacher-university lecturer, university lecturer, librarian, accountant, architect, researcher, lawyer, economist-women and development officer, physician, anaesthetist, prosthodontist, and anthropologist-community development worker. Two women were engineers and two were administrative secretaries-researchers, three were scientists, fourteen were housewives, and five were students.

31

Twenty-five of the ever-married respondents had higher education, while thirteen had less education.

32

Most of the respondents who had access to a car preferred to drive themselves, while 25.7% preferred to be driven by their husbands, and 17.1% preferred to be driven by relatives, friends, a chauffeur, or taxi. The reason respondents cited for preferring to drive themselves was the sense of independence and opportunity to be more spontaneous, while those who preferred to be driven were less confident maneuvering in the chaotic traffic. Given the difficulty of transportation in Cairo and the sexual harassment problems experienced by women, it is not surprising that respondents preferred to own a car. Respondents who owned a car had the greatest mobility and found it easier to be employed if they so wished. Those whose husbands had cars fared next best. The other respondents either had to suffer the indignities of public transportation or find employment close to home. Thus, the better educated the woman, the more likely she was to use a car or taxi for transportation, avoiding the sexual harassment rampant in public transportation. The less well-educated respondents were not so fortunate and this meant that their freedom of movement was severely hampered. The respondents who were employed in this study fell into four groups: well-educated and/or upper-middle class women who drove themselves them to work, well-educated middle class women who drove themselves to work or whose husbands drove them to work, lower-middle class women with some high school education who took public transportation to work, and illiterate or poorly educated women who walked to work or lived in their workplace.

33

This would include employment income, inheritance, and income from their families of origin.

34

Of the ten women with no income of their own, three were middle class university students. Two of these students were single and living with their families of origin while the other was married to a physician. A fourth middle class woman with no income of her own was married to a physician, and a fifth middle class woman was married to a middle class man who had completed only high school. The sixth woman with no income was university educated and married to a lower-middle class electrician, another woman was a lower-middle class high school student living with her parents. Another lower-middle class woman was married but not employed, and one *bawābah* was not allowed by her husband to earn money. The tenth woman is the woman who has been included in those with an income because of the substantial size of the allowance from her husband and her complete control over it.

One husband gave his wife a generous allowance over which she had total control. This allowance amounted to far more money than the entire combined monthly income of most respondents and their husbands. Because of the size of the monthly allowance and the independence the respondent had in spending it, she was included in the group with respondents who had an independent income.

35

Because of the severe economic pressures on Egyptians, 74.4% of respondents with control over their own income said that they voluntarily spent some of their own money on domestic expenses. A significantly greater percentage of women with no higher education (83.3%) spent some of their own money on necessary domestic expenses than did those with university education (65.5%), reflecting the greater economic necessity for them to contribute to subsistence household expenses, even though they have less to contribute than their better educated counterparts. Nevertheless, significantly more middle class and upper class women today are spending some of their own money on necessary domestic expenses than a decade ago because of the declining economic conditions within Egypt.

Twenty-nine respondents cited reasons for spending some of their own money on domestic expenses: 62.1% said that they had no choice; they did it out of economic necessity. One respondent with an engineering degree reported that it was her duty to do so, but most gave a variety of reasons, and some resented having to spend their own money on the household.

36

These three women constituted a tiny minority (5.9%) of all respondents, and only 8.6% of those respondents with higher education.

37

In fact, 81.3% of the childless respondents believed that men should take care of their own children sometimes, and another believed that child-care should be shared equally by both parents.

38

Of those respondents who said that men should never take care of their own children, four of them had less than high school education, one had high school, and one had higher education. Thus, only one of the respondents with higher education held this position in contrast to five with less education. Only two of the childless respondents gave this answer, both from the lower-middle class: one was illiterate and the other had some preparatory schooling.

39

Even though 86.3% of respondents believed that men should care for their own children sometimes, there was a significantly greater proportion of respondents with higher education (75%) giving this answer than those with less education (25%).

40

Reflecting the changing reality of domestic labor, 77.8% of these women had higher education, while 22.2% did not.

41

The two respondents who said that husbands should do half of the housework both held a bachelor degree: one woman was an unmarried Copt who did not intend to marry because she doubted that she could find an Egyptian man who shared her values; the other was a middle-aged, middle class woman who, while employed full-time in a professional occupation, was very pious and conservative. They represented only 5.7% of the respondents with higher education. This position would be a radical position in any society, but especially so in Egypt.

42

Six respondents said that men should never do housework and never look after their children. Seven women said that men should never do housework but should look after their children sometimes. One woman said that men should do half the housework and sometimes look after their children. One unmarried woman said that men should do half the housework and share child-care equally.

43

Abdel-Kader (1992), Early (1992), Gran (1977), Hatem (1988), El-Messīrī (1978b), Nadim (1985), Shāmī *et al.*, (1990), and Tucker (1976).

44

See Chapter Two. The following are only some of the references used here: ‘Abdel-Kader (1983 and 1992), L. ’Ahmed (1984), ‘Atīya (1982), Badran (1995), Diab (1968), Dyer (1994), Early (1985 and 1992), Eliraz (1982), Geadah (1996), Gran (1977), El-Hamamsy (1970), Hatem (1988); al-Hibrī (1982), Hijāb (1988), Hoodfar (1993a, 1996a, 1997b), Mernīsī (1982, 1987, 1988, 1991, 1993), Nadīm (1985), Nelson (1996), Rugh (1984 and 1985), El-Sa‘adāwī (1997), Sayigh (1981), Shaaban (1991), Shamī, *et al.* (1990), Smock and Youssef (1977), Sonbol (1988), Stino (1976), and Walther (1993).

45

While most respondents, as most Egyptians, reject the concept of equality of rights and responsibilities of the sexes in terms of sameness, there were some Western-educated Egyptian women working for international development organizations and/or non-governmental organizations who were involved in development projects in Egypt and who were themselves feminists believing in the inherent social equality of men and women. They believed that the sexes should have the same responsibilities and rights, and rejected the essentialist notion of gender. Supporting individual rights and freedoms, they were critical of extended family control over individuals. Only one of these women was interviewed fully, and therefore included in the respondents discussed here; however, much of the information I obtained from and about these women who were not subsequently included in the detailed interviews has been used for the thesis in a general way.

Chapter Eight
Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Egyptian women living in greater Cairo conceptualize gender, how they operationalize gender identity in terms of their actual behavior and social roles, and what implications this has for the socio-economic development of Egyptian society. The core data was obtained through in-depth, extensive interviews with fifty-one women aged sixteen to seventy-two from a wide variety of social groups, although a great many other Egyptian women acted as informants. Photographs of billboards depicting images of women found in the Cairo area during this period (1993-94) were utilized as a projective device to elicit respondents' beliefs and ideas about gender, along with open-ended questions to provide commonality across the interviews. Many other sources of data and information were also utilized to inform the analysis of interview data, including numerous Egyptian informants. The original purpose of providing women with an opportunity to voice their own beliefs, ideas, and concerns about gender identity and women's roles in Egyptian society remains central.

What emerged from discussions with Egyptian women, however, is the realization that gender identity is not only a normative concept; it is also an evaluative concept. Furthermore, gender identity was also inextricably linked to notions of national identity. In viewing images of women in billboard ads, the respondents first compared the projected image to their idealized image of an Egyptian woman, and then made an evaluation as to whether the woman was a "good" woman or an "evil" woman. Overwhelmingly, the images of women in billboard ads were extremely negative, violating all of the social norms which constitute gender-appropriateness in Egypt. This was evidenced by the indecent attire; inappropriate make-up and use of accessories; indecent pose and projected attitude; projected sexuality; breaking taboos such as kissing in public, smoking cigarettes and *s̲h̲īs̲h̲ah*, involvement in prostitution and drug trafficking, and ownership of a nightclub; and indecent, immoral, low status social roles such as acting, singing, and dancing.

Not only were the women depicted in billboard ads demonized in terms of their character, many of them were decidedly foreign in physical appearance and/or attire. The particular aspects of their appearance which marked them as foreign were also, in general, vociferously objected to by most respondents. Besides the indecent aspects referred to above, wearing hats and sunglasses are foreign habits which most Egyptian women do not wish to emulate. Physically, facial features, hair color and texture as well as hairstyles depicted are not possible for most Egyptian women to match. Some images were clearly symbolic of the Egyptian love-hate relationship with their old colonial masters, the British, and similarly, some were also Pharaonic.

Billboard images of women who appeared European, Oriental, and Pharaonic were generally disliked intensely by most respondents. A few, however, believed that the use of European women and/or European attire was a deliberate strategy to communicate the idea that the products advertised are *chic*, high class, superior to anything in Egypt. This is part of what is referred to as the *khawāgah* complex, the imitation of anything European as more modern and preferable to anything Egyptian, a view supported by a few respondents but criticized by most of them.[1] Respondents' evaluation of Pharaonic women was also generally negative, though a few respondents were proud of the Pharaonic heritage. None viewed Oriental images favorably because Orientals are considered "pagans" and their cultures perceived as inferior to Islam and Egyptian culture.

Most respondents did not identify with ancient Egyptians. Pharaonic culture was considered "pagan" and many of its practices were considered immoral. Coptic Christian and Muslim identities have taken precedence over Pharaonic identity for modern Egyptians generally. Coptic identity, which emphasizes asceticism and in many ways inverts Pharaonic values, replaced Pharaonic identity and laid the basis for Muslim identity in Egypt (Sherrard, 1966). Nevertheless, many aspects of Pharaonic culture were omnipresent in the lives of most respondents, and indeed, still typifies much of Egyptian culture. Many Pharaonic customs and celebrations are practiced by most Egyptians, seemingly without any sense of them being unIslamic, though educated Egyptians would be less inclined to continue them or admit that they did so (Fandy, 1993; Scheherezade, 1997:G5). As pointed out by many respondents, Coptic and Muslim alike, the asceticism of traditional Coptic Christianity and fundamentalist Islam does not suit the basic nature and culture of Egyptians. The ancient Egyptian love of life, earthiness, emotional expressiveness, warmth, and sensuality remain central to Egyptian culture as does their love of eating, dancing, and singing.[2] Thus, while most respondents saw no connection between themselves and ancient Egyptians, there were, indeed, many continuities in their beliefs and behavior. One of the main changes for women with the loss of Pharaonic culture, however, was their relatively egalitarian and independent relationship vis-à-vis men. While this occurred prior to the Islamic period, many believe that the patriarchal nature of Islam after the death of Muhammad has prevented a more egalitarian relationship between the sexes.[3] Only those respondents who followed a very strict, literalist, fundamentalist interpretation of religion, whether Christianity or Islam, led a very different lifestyle and held very different values than those central to Pharaonic culture. For most respondents, and most Egyptians, the main objection to Pharaonic identity is that the ancient Egyptians were "pagan".

The complete absence of ordinary Egyptian women realistically portrayed in billboard ads was of great concern to all the respondents, who complained bitterly that not only advertisers but the entire entertainment industry presented unrealistic and demonized images of Egyptian women. Respondents believed that this untrue representation of Egyptian women was highly problematic because it gives youth and men a distorted understanding of women and encourages them to treat women very badly. Some respondents also said that foreigners get a very distorted view of Egyptian women through these ads; and because Egyptian women are portrayed as prostitutes, these respondents said that they were treated very badly by foreigners, particularly Gulf Arabs, when they travelled abroad.

To understand why women are represented in such a negative fashion, we have to know who creates the images. Most of the respondents understood that billboard ads were designed to further commercial interests, primarily of private companies. They also understood, however, that the Egyptian entertainment industry is now bankrolled primarily by foreign money, and hence, significantly influenced by Gulf Arabs. Most importantly, the respondents knew that it was men, not women, who designed the ads. Furthermore, many respondents complained bitterly that the images were from the imaginations of male artists, and were seriously lacking much semblance to reality. These respondents believed that billboard representations of women were, in fact, projections of male fantasies about women, fantasies which reveal the dark side of patriarchy. They were upset that the government allowed such image to be depicted in public. This demonized representation of women, however, is not a phenomenon found only in Egypt. Rather, it is part of the global order of patriarchy and capitalism. Its emergence in Egypt is better understood if put in this global context.

Today, Egyptian society is set within an international context of states stratified within a global economic system of capitalism and a political system of U.S.-led Western hegemony characterized by neo-imperialist relations (Mitchell, 1991; Weinbaum, 1986). Furthermore, a patriarchal system of authority relations consisting of a complex hierarchy of social groups and based on militaristic domination also encompasses societies globally (El-Sa'adāwī, 1997). Just as states are stratified in a hierarchy internationally, each society is also based upon unequal power relationships amongst social groups.

In addition, multinational corporations have overpowered states in exercising economic and political power, subordinating, if not eliminating, the notion of public interest, even in the public sector. The voracious pursuit of private interests of individuals by capitalists has resulted in widespread dislocation and even break-up of nations as well as communities. Respondents from all social groups and classes lamented these developments. Many blamed the West for the impoverishment of Egypt, the breakdown of local communities, and even the breakdown of the extended family.

Local, regional, and national identities are under siege; many identities are being torn into component elements only to be recombined in bizarre, incoherent patterns.[4] So, too, the subjectivity of an individual is developed and defined by unequal power relationships amongst individuals in their everyday interactions as well as by the international forces described above. What identifications and identities are sanctioned, fostered, or actively encouraged and which ones are rehabilitated, suppressed, or denied are the result of powerful political and economic interests and have significant ethical and political repercussions for individuals and for societies (Fuss, 1995:8). This was clearly the case for respondents' identities as women, as Muslims and Copts, and as Egyptians, as discussed below.

Although globalization today is greater than at any previous time in history, Egyptians have experienced the domination of foreign empires and foreign comprador elites for at least two millennia. Each foreign elite has imposed its own subjectivity and identity upon Egyptians and attempted to replace local, particularistic Egyptian ones. Thus, the struggle to maintain a common Egyptian subjectivity distinct from that of foreign rulers has been central to Egyptian history and has been used to mobilize Egyptians to resist foreign domination militarily as well as ideologically. While the same can be said of European societies, modern social science still has no analytical categories which can be used to adequately address these concepts comprehensively and comparatively in a cross-cultural and historical manner which remains rooted in the concrete realities of particular localities and times (Amit-Talai and Knowles, 1996:13). Perhaps even more importantly, many social science theorists have lost sight of the fact that categories and concepts are not actors (*Ibid.*:14). In the final analysis, only individual persons are actors, though their action, like their subjectivity, is certainly shaped by unequal power relationships amongst people.

In addition, the terms of engagement in the production of subjectivity in Egypt are often beyond the control of individuals and even most groups in the society, extending to more powerful neighbors in the Arabian Gulf as well as the more hegemonic West. In terms of this particular study, Egyptian women respondents made it clear that these foreign interests are evident even though the actual design and production of the images is carried out in Egypt by Egyptians for Egyptian markets in Cairo. This is even more amazing given the fact that all but one of the ads were for locally-produced products. This reflects the use of mass media globally to reinforce and maintain patriarchal, capitalist, and Western neo-imperialist interests.[5] Since the stability of this global system depends upon the normalization of the values central to these hegemonic ideologies, mass media are powerful secondary agents of socialization. Mass media, along with the educational system, constitute the New International Information Order which works together with the New International Economic Order and the New International Political Order "...to veil the minds of men and women in the South as well as in the North" (El-Saʻadāwī, 1997:138).

Ironically, rather than producing a homogenized global culture, the success of Western and other elite capitalist globalization is dependent upon the fragmentation of non-elites.[6] In addition, the divide and rule strategy of British colonialism is again useful, so that the oppressed and exploited non-elites are not only fragmented but engaged in ideological and even bloody warfare amongst themselves in a complex struggle for more power. Even academics do their part, evidenced by the proliferation of post-modernist cultural studies and identity politics which serves to deflect the focus of analysis of conflicts from political and economic exploitation to culture (Belcher El-Nahhas, 1998:142). In the words of Egyptian psychiatrist and social activist, Nawāl as-Saʻdāwī (1997:168), "[s]words and words are used to divide the people [of the world] in the name of diversity, while the neo-colonialists globalize in NATO or in transnational corporations." The purpose, of course, remains the unification and stability of the privileged elites and the reduced probability of solidarity, much less revolution, amongst the fragmented non-elites at the bottom (*Ibid.*:121). Only one respondent was conscious of this in such an analytical manner. Others, however, had a more visceral sense of this oppression but could not verbalize it in an academic manner.

Setting the views of the respondents within the local, national, and international contexts requires a multi-level perspective and analysis that catches and explains them all at the same moment, yet does not lose sight of the dynamics between the multiple frames and sites (Amit-Talai and Knowles, 1996:265). Given Egypt's long history of patriarchy and its increasing integration into global capitalist relations, it is not surprising that gender and class are the most salient social categories which shape subjectivity and constitute the basis of identity. Neither is it surprising that religion and region are also powerful forces in the construction of subjectivity and identity in Egypt. Because dominant values are generally internalized by subordinate groups, domination-subordination is enshrined in cultural identities, referred to as interpellation by Althusser (1970 and 1971) and hegemony by Gramsci (1971). Furthermore, given the importance of Egypt's strong, centralized government in maintaining social control over the past five thousand years, it is not surprising that the state plays a major role in determining and promoting dominant values today. Similarly, as Poulantzas' (1973) analysis of European states indicates, it is not surprising that the Egyptian state itself is a site of divided hegemonic power-holding coalitions which both deny and facilitate opportunities for new alliances.[7] Many respondents were both perplexed and angry with the Egyptian government. Regardless of their idealized conceptualization of womanhood, they could not understand why the government allowed such unIslamic and even demonic images of women to be so prominently displayed in public. A few respondents were equally perplexed and angry about the government's tolerance of the promotion of *muḥaggabah* as the ideal Muslim woman by militant Islamic fundamentalists.

Regardless of the importance and even rigidity of social markers of identity and status in Egypt, it is clear from respondents' comments that their subjectivity has not been so over-determined by these social constructs as to erase individual human agency. In fact, the ability of the respondents to politically interpret and even reject some of these social constructs is evidence of their agency as subjects. That is, some respondents were able to recognize the importance of their social position relative to others and that it was not so much their particular internal characteristics as persons as it was their social position relative to others that determined what choices they had and how they were treated. The social reality of one's particular social position is causally relevant for one's experiences and the development of one's cultural identities and both condition and are conditioned by one's interpretation of them (Moya, 1997). From this viewpoint, it is easier for an individual to see the political, economic, cultural, and other social forces which affect them. Even Freud (1921) believed that there can be no politics without identification because any social group is constituted through identification amongst the members through social ties existing on perceptions of similarity and shared interests. In Egypt, individualism is an alien concept; group identity continues to be more important in determining values and behavior even though group solidarity is breaking down.[8] Respondents made it very clear that traditional views and group solidarity make it very difficult for them to question, let alone challenge, their subordination to male authority. The only option available for some respondents, for instance, was to find socially acceptable grounds to avoid marriage by rejecting potential marriage partners as unacceptable. Nevertheless, because of the fact that they had no other option than to live at home with their parents, their independence as individuals was stymied.

Dominant groups will try to maintain their superior position in the social hierarchy while subordinated groups will try to enhance their own position by whatever strategies are available to them to improve their social status, gain more positive distinctiveness, and a more positive identity vis-à-vis those subordinate to them. While social mobility is purported to be central to a liberal society, it is much more difficult for individuals to change their social categorization in Egypt where the class system and social group boundaries are much more rigid. The great gaps of power and privilege amongst the classes and other salient factors distinguishing social groups in Egypt are extremely difficult to overcome. This is evidenced by the sudden enrichment of a substantial number of lower-middle class Egyptians during the Open Door policy of the mid-1970's. More wealthy than many in the elite, without post-secondary education and family pedigree, these individuals are greatly resented by the old middle class as well as the elite. Although they constitute a significant factor in the current Egyptian social structure, they have gained neither social legitimacy nor political power. Similar to the *bourgeois* revolution in Europe, individuals in this social stratum try to marry into middle and upper-middle class families whose economic circumstances are in great decline. One's social group and class are, thus, central to an Egyptian's social identity. People from high status social groups will have high self-esteem derived from their positive social identities, while those from low status social groups will have negative social identities which may result in low self-esteem. Without the possibility of assimilation into higher groups or the ability to develop new identities which can compare and compete with dominant groups, subordinate groups in Egypt have compared themselves to groups subordinate to them and/or challenged the legitimacy of the basis of the current status and power hierarchy. To a certain extent, this has occurred with the *embourgeoisment* of many in the lower-middle and middle classes as a result of the Open Door policy in the mid-1970's. Because of the rigidity of the social hierarchy, however, mobilization of large groups demanding social change is more likely and has, in fact occurred. Hence, the state depends on direct military and police presence and action to maintain social control in Egypt. Despite rhetoric about democratization, Egypt remains an authoritarian, if not totalitarian, state, one in which all serious opposition is silenced one way or another.[9]

Most of the respondents complained bitterly about the rising influence of wealthy people from the lower and middle classes and pointed out in great detail the negative moral impact this has had on society. While most respondents believed that higher education was a legitimate means of social mobility into the middle and even upper-middle classes, they also believed in the legitimacy of traditional elite values. In this sense, respondents were decrying the liberalization of Egyptian society because they supported traditional, conservative ideas about class values and lifestyles. Even though many university-educated middle class respondents were frustrated in their attempts to increase their socio-economic status, they believed themselves to be superior to the less-educated *nouveau riche,* whose political and economic influence they rejected as illegitimate. Thus, while most respondents were cynical about the lack of democracy and severe military repression in Egypt, at the same time they were upset that the government did not restrict the influence of this "new middle class", the *nouveau riche.*

For the most part, social forces act to disempower women and to fragment their subjectivity. The everyday experience of living in a patriarchal society continually fragments women's subjectivity into conflicting parts and bombards them with negative beliefs and ideas about women. To become a feminist, however, necessitates the reinterpretation of values and a reconstruction of subjectivity and identity from a politically conscious analysis of their social position as women, that is, to exercise their agency as subjects, rather than accepting a socially-determined set of values from a pre-given identity as women. The "facts" remain the same, but the interpretation will change radically as a woman asserts her position as subject.

Any attempt to focus on and understand femininity and womanhood in Egyptian society necessitates an understanding of its fragmenting of subjectivity and identity. The same is true when focussing on national identity. This is true because any one individual's subjectivity and social identity consists of multiple, fragmented, and intersected identities which are separated and suspended in space and time (Grillo, 1995:17). In other words, a particular woman's identity will be projected and/or perceived entirely differently, depending upon the situation, the time, the place, the actors involved. For instance, a middle-aged well-educated, professional elite Egyptian woman dressed in expensive, European clothes who is slender with well-groomed, smooth, long "black" hair at a United Nations office in Cairo would be perceived as privileged and powerful, someone to be obeyed by her class subordinates. Alone in a hotel lobby, she may well be mistaken for a prostitute, verbally and sexually harassed by men of all classes and gazed at by curious and even disapproving women in the company of male guardians. At home, this same woman may be perceived as the dutiful daughter, wife, and mother, a woman to be admired because she successfully manages a family, a household and a career. In the local public school, she may be perceived as the generous patron of programs for "disadvantaged" children. To one relative, she may be a vain, arrogant woman, whereas to another relative she is a role model. To her supervisor, she may be a stubborn, willful employee who is difficult to control, causes great dissension at work because she is not "feminine" enough, but who cannot be disciplined because of her high social status. To the European visitor, she is mistaken for a French woman, but to the Egyptian *bawābah*, she is an imposter, belonging to neither Europe nor Egypt.

Any of these scenarios emphasize some aspects of identity over others, but any of her attributes, whether social or biological, reflect both privilege and subordination. As a woman, she is always subordinated to a man. As a rich, elite Egyptian woman, she is always subordinated to a European. She is also deeply resented by less privileged Egyptians. As a slender Egyptian woman, she is subordinated to the fat Egyptian woman who is closer to the idealized beauty. As an employed woman, she is subordinated to the elite woman of leisure. As a beautiful woman, she is objectified as a sex object for men's carnal desires. As an employee of the United Nations, she is vilified by Egyptians who resent foreign domination. Thus, an individual can be simultaneously oppressed and privileged by a multiplicity of identities (Grillo, 1995:20).

The problem is that there are severe social sanctions imposed on women who try to exercise their agency in such an independent manner. This is true in all patriarchal societies, and Egypt is no exception. In fact, in Egypt, women are murdered, usually by their male guardians, for "shaming" their families for violating social norms (Daniszewski, 1997; United Press International, 1997). The virtually universal acceptance of gender as essentialist and its centrality to Egyptian social norms makes it unlikely that women will question their legitimacy and even more unlikely that women will violate these norms voluntarily. This was made abundantly clear by all the respondents in this study. The billboard ad (photo #27) for the movie, "'*Ind̲h̲ār bi-Ṭā'ah*" ("Notification of Order of Obedience"), spawned a prolific and heated discussion by most respondents about the misuse of power over women by men and the lack of protection for women. While most respondents believed that a woman should obey her father and/or husband, they also recognized that male authority over women vested in Islam has been abused, both by men as individuals and by religious and state institutions.

One major problem of holding an essentialist notion of womanhood and femininity is that the link between identity and politics is not acknowledged and so identity cannot be problematized. In fact, antifeminist women almost always hold this position. The subjectivity, and thus, agency, of such women is underdeveloped by their being socially over-determined, though it is perceived to be biologically determined. That is, they are unaware of the possibility of their ability, if not their right, to take responsibility for the construction of their identity, to accept or modify or reject social constructions, to consciously exercise their agency through self-conscious choices. An individual woman acts but is also acted upon by social forces; but her action also acts upon these social forces. Identity itself becomes a political issue rooted in materialist practices of everyday life. When women accept the essentialist conceptualization of womanhood and femininity, the identity of women is ontologically independent of their social position, the social and material conditions of everyday life, as well as the historical period. This concept of femininity and womanhood is universal, totalizing, and homogenizing. The biological status of being female is the ultimate determiner of gender, of personality, behavior patterns, and social roles.

Similarly, an essentialist notion of what it means to be a Muslim woman can be equally restricting of individual agency, particularly since Muslims believe that the *Qur'ān* is the literal word of God, and as such, is perfect and unchangeable. On the other hand, it provides a unifying function for most Egyptians and one which stands in stark opposition to the threatening hegemony of Western Christians. While most of the respondents in this study did have a relatively narrow conceptualization of what constitutes legitimate Muslim female identity, they also realized that there were numerous socio-economic obstacles which made it difficult, if not impossible, to actually operationalize this identity. Thus, in the course of their everyday lives, they had to act in ways which were contrary to their idealized identity as Muslim women. Coptic respondents were also torn by questions of identity. While they all said that being Christian gave them much in common with Westerners, they did not accept what they believed to be the immoral nature of Western life-styles. In general, they said that there was not much difference in the values and life-styles of traditional and/or fundamentalist Copts and Muslims. The gap between the ideal and the real was very apparent to almost all the respondents, regardless of their conceptualization of the ideal woman.

In addition, an essentialist notion of ethnicity and race provides a strong affective dimension and attachment to an Egyptian national identity (after Hooks, 1992). It includes a notion of particular ways of being and particular ways of acting (*Ibid.*). As such, it serves to differentiate Egyptians from all others. Given the ancient history of strong, locally-based Egyptian nationalism, this is both an indigenous, unifying factor as well as a source of strong resistance to Western neo-imperialism. Nevertheless, there is a certain irony to the fact that there are dominated religious, ethnic, and racial minorities in Egypt, even though their numbers are relatively small. The fact that these subordinated minorities refer to the majority as "Egyptians" and to themselves in more particularistic terms, indigenous to their own cultures and language or dialect, is itself indicative of their separateness as a people. Spatially, there is also a separation between most minorities and the majority, not just in terms of where they live but also in what they call their region versus other regions. Minorities have long referred to Cairo and Lower Egypt as "Egypt" and have other names for their own regions (Goitein, 1969; Gulick, 1969).

Although ethnic and racial identity were not part of the initial research focus for this study, respondents made it clear that they were integral to their identity as Egyptian women. It became clear that from respondents' comments that because the physical differences amongst the different racial and ethnic groups in Egypt is readily apparent, this constitutes a strong aspect of identity. Skin color is particularly salient in linking social status, class, and racial/ethnic identity in Egypt. Because of intermixing of the local groups as well as with foreign comprador elites and invaders, many Egyptian families have members whose skin color can vary from very dark brown ("black") to almost "white" because of their heterozygous genes. Given the preference for white skin which dates back at least to the Arab conquest of 642 A.D. and the historical association of "black" skin with low class slaves, the current Western hegemonic privileging of white skin constitutes a continuation of an old norm in Egypt. In fact, even the ancient Egyptians associated white skin with high social class, since wealthy people could avoid hard work in the outdoors which would greatly darken the skin of lower class people (Tyldesley, 1994:115). Respondents discussed the importance of skin color and ethnicity at length.

The very bitter memory of British colonialism in Egypt, however, overshadows any collective memory of indigenous norms privileging white skin and further complicates Egyptians' notions of identity. Recognizing the impact of colonialism on Egyptians is also important in research focussing on identity, and here Franz Fanon's analysis is particularly useful in interpreting respondents' views. As a "black" man from a poor African country working as a psychiatrist in French-dominated and war-torn Algeria, Fanon provides a unique analysis which has withstood the test of time. Indeed, Arab writers have gained insight into Egyptian society through Fanon's writing (MacLeod, 1991; Sayigh, 1981). Thus, this study is enlightened by an understanding of some of the relevant non-Western as well as Western literature on identity.

A few respondents, for instance, were particularly offended by what they believed to be references to British colonial control over Egypt in the Coca Cola ad (photo #1). While they had a clear understanding of neo-imperialism which inoculated them against feelings of inferiority, many respondents were much more conflicted about this ad and their own identity.

While colonialization of subjectivity described by Fanon exercises its authority through the subordinates' mimicry of Europeans, Fuss (1995) reminds us that there is fine line between mimicry of subjugation and mimicry of subversion. Subversive mimicry has revolutionary potential -- the use of parody, mockery, sarcasm, irony, and jokes to discredit and undermine alienation, if not domination. Ironically, Fanon warns us that mimicry of subjugation can also provide opportunities for disruption and resistance, just as mimicry of subversion can reinforce colonial subordination. Theatricalization and politicization of one's own identifications can be a radically transformative process (Diamond, 1993). "...[T]he capability of identification to override the constraints of identity give this psychical process enormous political efficacy" (*Op cit.*:18). Arabic as a language is very rich in the use of these subversive linguistic forms. Egyptians are notorious for being critical and grossly insubordinate in socially acceptable ways through clever use of language in everyday life. Furthermore, satirical comedies have been popular in Egyptian theatres for decades. Several well-known psychiatrists told me that this is a major safety valve for Egyptian society, which is why they believe the government tolerates such expression. Some respondents pointed this out in reference to the play, *Khadīwī*(photos #15-#16).

It is the dislocated space between imitation and identification which enables the possibility of subject agency and a politics of intentionality to develop (Fanon, 1967). Women are psychically and socially alienated just as colonized people are psychically and socially alienated. Most respondents, however, were not consciously aware of this, though most felt ill at ease. Mitchell (1991) also believes that colonization and continued foreign domination has created a division between the conceptual and the material worlds in Egypt, which also creates a division and alienation between the minds and bodies of Egyptians.

Fanon (1967) found that the greater one's mastery of the colonizers' tools, the greater one's assimilation of Western identities, the greater one's alienation. Likewise, the higher one's class and education, the greater one's opportunities to master the colonizers' tools. In Egypt, it is also true that the higher one's social status, class, and education, the more likely that one will speak fluent French and English, assimilate Western values, mannerisms, and lifestyles, and be utterly alienated from the vast majority of Egyptians, whom such a person would likely despise. The identity of this privileged elite is suspended, ambiguous, impossible, and in internal exile. As Fuss (1995:165) states, "...identification names not only the history of the subject, but the subject in history." Fanon provides a politics which enables us not only to understand the complex process of the development of subjectivity, but to be in more conscious control of it (Fuss, 1995; Sayigh, 1981). Indeed, some respondents had studied and/or worked in the West, all of whom said they returned to Egypt because of this dilemma. They decided to remain in "their own" society.

Ultimately, however, an individual must strive to minimize, if not unify, contradictions within the Self. All the various identities have to work together harmoniously to minimize psychic and social alienation. Several social theorists, themselves from marginalized identities, have suggested ways that individuals and even collectivities can resist domination and develop their own subjectivity. For instance, Hudak (1993:174) suggests that "[w]hen memory is politicized, the margins come to represent a social location that is...a place of deprivation and...a way of seeing reality whose intent is survival and resistance." Foucault (1989:92) suggests that one can develop counter-memory: "...[if one controls people's memory, one controls their dynamism. And one controls their experience, their knowledge of previous struggles." Thus, history and historical memory can be used to reinforce marginalization and domination or to resist it. Furthermore, Bell Hooks (1990:153) suggests that one can choose marginality as a site of resistance. Identity can be deliberately decentered and space can be claimed. "The starting point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and in 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory" (Gramsci, 1971:324).

Regardless of one's social position, identification with particular identities is always a political choice, not just a personal or moral choice (Harlow, 1991:163). Even those from the dominant elites can make a conscious choice to pursue cross-identification with the struggle of oppressed social groups in order to challenge and break down the dominant ideologies which evoke and reinforce "...a discourse of natural boundaries to categorize, regulate, and patrol social identities" (*Ibid.*). In fact, such cross-identifications are a political imperative for building effective coalitions necessary for social change and social social justice (Fuss, 1995:8). In Egypt, however, while some privileged Egyptians do reject Western identities, few accept cross-identifications with subordinated groups in Egypt. This was most acutely seen in terms of the *nouveau riche* vis-à-vis other groups. Like most of the Nasserites who professed pan-Arabism and Sadatists who professed pan-Islamism, those who talk about societal solidarity have no intention of giving up their own privilege and even less intention of actually treating subordinate Egyptians as their social equals.[10] Too often, such cross-identifications have resulted in greater domination of subordinated groups, "appropriation in the guise of an embrace" (Sommer, 1994:543). Most of the respondents from the educated middle class as well as the upper-middle and upper classes expressed great disgust for the *nouveau riche*.

For Egyptian women, like women in most other countries, womanhood is neither conceptually nor socially a single, unified category. Even for a particular woman, significant changes will occur in her identity and social roles over the course of a lifetime because of the importance of biology and culture in the various stages of life. Serious divisions also exist amongst women based on class, education, race, ethnicity, region, age, physical appearance (beauty), marital status, parental status, and religion. These are all overlapping aspects of a person's subjectivity which reflect and reinforce existing political, economic, and other social inequalities in Egyptian society. Furthermore, within any one particular constellation of identities, a woman's interests, opportunities, experiences, problems, and roles will change with time, circumstances, and context. Even though women are subordinated to and exploited by men, they are usually economically and socially dependent upon their male guardians and relatives. They may still have great loyalty and empathy with other women in their group and even a high degree of solidarity, but they also often have more in common with their male guardians and kin than they have with women from other social groups (Nawār, *et al.*, 1995). This is related to the relatively closed and hierarchical nature of Egyptian social groups and classes as discussed above.

Thus, given the essentialist notion of gender inherent in Islam and the literalist adherence of most respondents, like most Egyptians, to religion, it is not surprising that most respondents, like most Egyptian women, accept the authority and even superiority of men as legitimate. Therefore, women holding these views tend not to conceptualize their relationships with men as negative or conflictive, and do not think of relations between men and women as problematic. This was, in fact, true for most of the respondents. Such women also tend not to be aware or concerned about the low status and power of women as a group vis-à-vis men. While many of the respondents believed that women as a group should not have low social status, they recognized that women are not given sufficient recognition in Egypt. This orientation of traditional, patriarchal women to believe that gender is essentialist is common to all patriarchal societies (Condor, 1986). In contrast to more masculinist notions of identity, in which a person exercises individualistic social agency to differentiate and compete with others, this approach recognizes the importance of affiliation and emotional attachment to others which is central to identity, particularly for women. Thus, as is also the case in the West, meaning is given communally through relationships with others in groups, providing the basis for in-group identity, membership, and solidarity.[11] As discussed above, individualism is an alien concept in Egypt. Respondents clearly sought identity with their extended family even if that meant not pursuing opportunities for personal advancement. None saw this as a personal sacrifice.

So long as the neo-patriarchal state does not provide employment, social programs, and other opportunities which would enable women to live independently of men, women remain dependent upon their male guardians and kin. This acts as a subconscious barrier to women considering their relationships with men to be unfair and problematic. It also acts as a very strong barrier to women from all social groups working together to develop a more feminist consciousness and to act collectively to improve the status, rights, and roles of women in Egyptian society. This is the case in any patriarchal society, including those in the West (Gurin and Townsend, 1984). Nawāl as-Sa'dāwī (1997) is an example of an Egyptian woman who has tried to make this a public issue in Egypt since the early 1960's. Her banishment from public life by the government, Islamic fundamentalists, and even "progressive" women's groups in Egypt is evidence of the continuing unfavorable climate for such discussion.

Another factor that has contributed to the lack of solidarity amongst Egyptian women is the fact that there have been changing criteria for womanhood throughout this century, with the most dramatic changes occurring during the Nāsir regime in the 1960's when all urban women were expected to become educated, employed outside the household, and exercise political rights in the state. Basking in the pride of national liberation, self-determination, and non-alignment, most Egyptians shared the new social norms of the welfare state and social mobility, since most of them benefited. With the severe patriarchal backlash to this improvement in women's status, rights, and roles during the late 1970's and 1980's and severely deteriorating economic conditions in Egypt for most people, legislative protection of the gains made by women has been eroded and there is no longer any clear social consensus. The uproar caused by the 1979 Personal Status Laws and their subsequent repeal is a clear example. Most middle-aged and elderly respondents believed that their daughters and granddaughters have less opportunity for advancement than they did. Younger respondents complained that they face greater social hostility to gaining post-secondary education and employment than the older generations. All the respondents lamented the narrowing of choices for women and the general dropping of women's social status.[12]

There is a longstanding consensus, however, regarding education. The high value placed on education by all Egyptians and its significance socially as a marker of social status has not been diminished (Suleiman, 1983). Post-secondary education, command of classical Arabic, and knowledge of a European language are still essential for social mobility from the lower classes as well as for maintaining a high class status in Egypt. Indeed, a woman's life chances are directly enhanced by these accomplishments just as they are dashed by lack of access to education. Significant differences in gender identity and social roles amongst respondents were due to differences in their education.. In fact, significant differences between the education of respondents and their mothers were also found to be related to the differences between the gender identity and social roles of each generation. With overcrowded, underfunded public schools and overworked, underpaid teachers, middle class Egyptians are experiencing severe pressure to send their children to private schools. The mushrooming of private schools at all levels of education has provided more access to education, but the better quality schools are extremely expensive and those built by Islamic fundamentalist groups are open only to Muslims who support them. All respondents in this study discussed these aspects of identity and social reality passionately in great detail.

With the state seriously challenged by Islamic fundamentalist groups, many of which provide extensive social welfare programs, the state has tried various strategies to counter their popularity. Sometimes promoting secular, modern initiatives and other times promoting reformist, modern Islamic ones, the state waivers in its attempts to be all things to all people, yet is unable or unwilling to deliver its promise of socio-economic development, social justice, and social peace. Judges and religious leaders at the local and national levels are themselves also divided, resulting in contradictory religious and legal edicts. Although the state tries to control the mass media and the formation and activity of organizations in civil society, groups opposed to the official government position do operate on the margins and even underground. Women find themselves caught in the cross-currents of these very different conceptualizations of womanhood. Ironically, they often find their own experiences in everyday life contradictory to the ideals promoted by the state and by various oppositional groups and organizations. Furthermore, women often belong to several social groups, all of which may have different and even contradictory demands on them, and all of which confer some kind of social identity. Again, this produces cognitive and role dissonance for women (Oakes, 1987; Moscovici, 1988). This was a major concern for all respondents.

Respondents explained that most Egyptian women find that their internal criteria for womanhood are incompatible with external criteria of family and other people in their immediate environment upon whom they are dependent. They told stories about their own lives as well as of their women relatives, friends, and neighbors. Since gender identity is related to group consciousness, and since both are flexible, both social and psychological factors influence how positively or negatively a woman will consider her own particular subjectivity and social identity. The various identities constituting a person's subjectivity or sense of Self are not only individual identities but social categories which are themselves linked to social comparisons which ultimately contribute to the reinforcement or changing of social identities. Even if a woman is very sure of herself, she may be marginalized by others. Many women realize that the different conceptualizations of femininity and womanhood are not only multifaceted but have been transient and dependent upon power struggles amongst different social groups for not only control of the state, but general hegemonic control of society. Thus, gender identity, at both the level of the individual and of society, is affected by the social and historical contexts. All respondents believed that there should be social restraint and limits placed on individual behavior, particularly for women, though for most, this belief was rooted in religion. Most respondents did not have a more critical social science understanding of this. Indeed, most respondents were appalled that this approach could be used by academics in the West.

Today, there are several notions of feminine gender identity being promoted in Egypt by different groups competing for hegemony. In the reality of everyday life, many of the assumptions underlying these notions of gender identity are inconsistent and even contradictory; they may also change from one situation to another. Furthermore, the human qualities required for carrying out different aspects of gender identity often differ greatly, such as domestic and employment responsibilities, resulting in severe dissonance for women. Despite the increasing individualism fostered by the break-up of communal households of extended kin, labor migration, and increasing consumerism in Egypt, communal identities are still far more powerful and important than individualistic identities, as discussed above. The more affective nature of communal ties, therefore, are not only more important aspects of intergroup relations in Egypt, but also of interaction amongst in-group members. Nevertheless, Skevington (1989) reminds us that even individualistic, agentic, cognitively-oriented identities and behavior have affective components.

For the respondents, the affective and group-identity components were all-encompassing. Clearly, despite the lack of consensus about identity in the social sciences, Western conceptualizations of identity are generally inapplicable to Egyptians because of the immense cultural differences. The strong emphasis on individualism and ego-centric behavior in Western cultures is completely alien to Egyptian culture. It is also antithetical to Islamic principles of interpersonal relations and identity. This was made clear by all respondents, regardless of religion, region, social group, or class. Indeed, both Christian and Muslim Egyptians view gender through the prism of religion and most Egyptians are opposed to secular family law as evidenced by the great public uproar over the 1979 Personal Status Laws and the comments of respondents in this study. Many Western feminist ideas about women and about relations between the sexes are, therefore, abhorrent to Egyptians, as explained by the respondents. There are liberating and limiting aspects of Egyptian and Western cultures alike, but understanding these differences in culture is important.

Not only the process of developing social categories and social identities but also the content of them is important in understanding subjectivity and identity formation (Turner, 1987). Besides being categorized by self and by others, the schemata and representations of gender and other aspects of identity are also socially produced and subjectively self-reflected upon. Thus, gender identity functions as a self-schemata, sensitizing a person to the social environment and giving structure to social situations. This has important implications for one's values, attitudes, beliefs, ideas, behavior, and social roles. This is why gender identity is so important.

Applying Fanon's (1961 and 1967) analysis at the societal level in Egypt, internalization of Western identities by *petite bourgeois* and other ruling elites plays a conservative role in that it perpetuates Egypt's dependency on the West and reinforces its state of underdevelopment, even though these Egyptian elites used indigenous national culture and religion to manipulate the masses. Indeed, this was a major concern of some respondents. In marked contrast, the modernization theorists view the social role played by class, particularly the middle and *petite bourgeois*, as a positive one leading to development (Berger, 1958; Halpern, 1963; Lerner, 1958). In fact, some of the middle and upper-middle class respondents held this view and their families were directly involved in supporting U.S. control over Egypt. The middle and, to a lesser extent, also the upper classes, however, were not completely free of traditional religious and cultural values (El-Messīrī, 1978; Zghal, 1977). It was evident that this was the case for most of the respondents. Besides the alienation and contradictory identities experienced by individuals, the contradiction between the desire for authentic development and authentic culture and the reality of acute but also chronic ideological, social, political, and economic crises at the societal level results in widespread social disorganization and violence as well as the resurgence of militant Islamic fundamentalism. Most respondents felt very conflicted about Islamic identity as women. Some had accepted and operationalized the Islamic fundamentalist conception of womanhood as *muḥaggabah*, while others accepted it in principle but wanted to postpone operationalizing it until they were post-menopause. *Baladī* respondents generally thought it ridiculous and were happy with their *baladī* identity. Some educated respondents rejected the fundamentalist *muḥaggabah* identity as unIslamic and the *baladī* identity as below their social status and class.

The link between social representation(s) and social identit(ies), though controversial, is not well known, partly because it is not well researched and partly because of the debate over how to define social representation (Duveen and Lloyd, 1986; Jahoda, 1988; Moscovici, 1988). The focus has usually been on the categorization process and the assumption is that social identity is grounded in social representation (Duveen and Lloyd, 1986). What is the nature of collective representations of women as depicted on billboards in the Cairo region during 1993-94? Although this was not the intention of the study, respondents spoke at great length about this issue. Thus, it is important to integrate this into the study.

Given the plurality of social groups in Egypt, and the complexity of inter-group relations, it is important to account for not only which groups are represented, but how they are represented and by whom. Respondents pointed this out in their discussion about the billboard ads. Both interpersonal and inter-group relations involve bargaining and negotiation as well as orthogonal (intersecting at right angles) relations, all of which affect and may even transform individuals (Skevington and Baker, 1989; Stephenson, 1981). We cannot understand the social category and social representation of women and womanhood unless we identify and analyze the ideologies underpinning them, because, ultimately, they determine women's social status, their rights, and their roles in society. In Egypt, this means not only identifying the various groups vying for political, economic, and social hegemony, but determining their relative power in the public realm. In part, this is reflected in the images of women depicted in billboard advertisements. Indeed, most respondents were quick to point out that these billboard images of women were, in fact, contrary to traditional Egyptian social norms as well as to Islam. While most of them did not have a sophisticated academic understanding of this, they all realized that the billboard images were products of men's imagination linked to the objectification of women for capitalist gain, but completely immoral from the point of view of all the respondents.

Overwhelmingly, women are portrayed on billboards very negatively in light of the social norms for femininity, womanhood, and national identity in Egypt. They lacked authenticity because they conformed neither to ancient or modern Egyptian norms nor to Western norms and because they were far removed from the physical and social realities of most Egyptian women. As so many respondents lamented, these images of women were fantasies of men, images created in men's minds. Furthermore, respondents believed that these images were humiliating for themselves, for the women depicted in the ads, and for Egyptian women in general. In addition, this humiliation of women has both racist and sexual dimensions. It is obvious that most of the images of women depicted in billboard ads reflected patriarchal, racist, and neo-imperialist values and allowed women to emerge as subjects only for the sexual and racist enjoyment of men. Hence, women are constructed as objects of male fantasy, not only in the mass media but increasingly inside the family. Male ownership extends far beyond physical control of women, to the control of women's subjectivity and identities.

Some respondents blamed the women who were depicted in billboard ads for exercising immoral agency to attract and seduce men. Even so, these respondents also recognized that these women were only trying to please men, to improve their economic circumstances by gaining recognition from men through standards established by men. Therefore, even though most respondents had very low opinions about entertainers and prostitutes, they recognized that society provided many of the women in these occupations with little choice. Furthermore, they also realized that the choices were cruel for women and were determined, for the most part, by men. In addition, many respondents also related stories of women friends who had been coerced into living out their husbands' indecent fantasies or face divorce.

By incorporating many aspects of Western patriarchal and capitalist values into the images of women depicted in billboards, these ads also reflect the neo-imperialist aspects of Egypt's relationship with the West. They also reflect the continuing love-hate relationship which most educated Egyptians have with many aspects of modern, Western identities. Like the other patriarchal aspects of these images, however, the aspects of foreign identity proved to be figments of the male artists' imaginations more than any realistic rendering. Some respondents were much more critical of certain symbols and representations of foreign identity, such as the wearing of hats or sunglasses, than they were of others such as the drinking of Coca Cola. This reflects the different levels of assimilation into Western capitalism but it also reflects the existence of a residual core identity as an Egyptian woman vis-à-vis a foreign, Western [Christian] woman.

While many respondents bemoaned the immorality of the images of women found on billboards, they also bitterly complained about the government allowing such images to be displayed. Not only the objectification and degradation of women, but the strong backlash by Islamic fundamentalist groups was cited by respondents as a reason not to allow these images. Many respondents said that it was wrong to irritate religious people in general with these ads, but that it was dangerous to incite the more militant fundamentalists to take violent action, even against women. Some respondents recognized the possibility that, in fact, the government was deliberately allowing these provocative billboards as a way of letting people know that the Islamic fundamentalists have no power in Egyptian society. It also communicates the reality that Islamic fundamentalist conceptualizations of femininity and womanhood have no legitimacy in Egyptian society, and hence, they are not allowed public space to post their alternative constructions. The idea that Islamic fundamentalist groups are not popular amongst the general Egyptian population, however, is false. Many respondents know this, whether they support them or the government. Blocking alternative images of women only serves to highlight the authoritarian nature of the Egyptian government and the elites who support it.

In addition, some respondents believed that rich men from the Arab Gulf states had gained financial control over the Egyptian entertainment industries. The Arab Gulf states are officially fundamentalist in their interpretation of Islam, funnel vast amounts of money into Egypt to support Islamic fundamentalist groups and causes, and are even more authoritarian than Egypt. So why would they support immoral entertainment and advertising in Egypt? These activities would certainly not be tolerated in the Arab Gulf countries. In Egypt, however, this can provide entertainment for Gulf Arabs and other foreigners, generate high profits, and it can also contribute to the popularity of Islamic fundamentalism in Egypt by creating a huge backlash. Many of the middle and upper class respondents lamented this destruction of cultural activities in Egypt and their dissatisfaction with not being able to enjoy highly cultured entertainment in Arabic anymore.

Thus, at a time when the Egyptian state is promoting the integration of women into the labor market, the Egyptian economy and the state itself are being subjected to intense pressure by international capital through the World Bank-International Monetary Fund structural adjustment program and U.S. foreign aid, resulting in the loss of a significant number of public sector jobs, below subsistence salaries, and very few high paying jobs in the private sector.[13] The public sector is becoming less able to respond to the needs of citizens while at the same time the extended family has also lost its economic base and much of its power over kin (Sharābī, 1988). The rigidly hierarchical social structure of Egyptian society has been damaged and seriously destabilized. The recently acquired economic affluence of a sizeable section of the lower-middle class which now demands increased social status and political power from beleaguered upper-middle and upper classes is one aspect of this. The other is that, ironically, the upper-middle and upper class elites have recently lost much of their economic monopolization and are now increasingly under siege by subordinate classes for control of the state, necessary for hegemonic political power ('Amīn, 1997).

With these economic and political battles waged amongst men, women are tied even more closely to the authority and circumstances of their male guardians and kin. As economic pressures mount and opportunities for maintaining a decent and stable standard of living diminish, men from all social classes are much less willing to compete economically with women. Men are increasingly demanding that women stay out of the public sphere, and punishing women who do dare to appear in public without male guardians. Thus, ideologically, the stage is set for the demonization of women in the public sphere. Any woman appearing in public is a whore. It is not surprising, then, that billboard ads depict women as whores. It is also not surprising that "ordinary" women are not depicted in billboard ads. Thus, grandmothers, mothers, wives, daughters, and granddaughters have been isolated in their households, rendered publicly invisible. Respondents discussed this at length during the interviews. The proliferation of these images indicate that we are back to the old patriarchal dichotomous notion of women as innocent, good Madonnas or experienced, evil Whores, neither of which ever existed in the flesh but are a reflection of men's imaginations.

If we want to change the status, rights, and roles of women in society, then we must change the way women and womanhood is represented socially, including their depiction in billboards. Many of the respondents recognized this and believed passionately that it was wrong of men to depict women so negatively; yet, few believed that women would be able to influence the social representation of women in advertisements. The only example respondents gave which recognized the potential of human agency for change was when people complained bitterly about the explicitness of the sanitary napkin ads on television until they were modified. Even here, change was most likely due more to male rage than to female rage, since men were also quite furious about this particular ad. Thus, respondents, and Egyptian women in general, recognize that they are relatively powerless in challenging the legitimacy of ideas and practices which are harmful for women (Antonius, 1997). Without alliances with men, women are not likely to be taken seriously.

Thus, even though women may appear to form the single most important natural social grouping in society, they are also one of the most powerless in a patriarchal society. Women as a natural social grouping are also complex in terms of social identity, as discussed above (Skevington and Baker, 1989). It is obvious that there is no single social identity for women, and that womanhood is a very complex, multi-faceted, heterogeneous, and even incoherent social category which has multiple implicit and explicit meanings for any and all members of a society, all of which is flexible and changes over time and with (sub)cultures (*Ibid.*). Given the severe inequalities amongst social groups in Egypt, the staunchly patriarchal nature of the society, and the importance of Egypt as a site for hegemonic struggles between Arab and Western interests within a global system of patriarchal capitalism, it is no wonder that Egyptian women feel oppressed and disempowered. That billboard ads depict women in this manner is, thus, also not surprising. In fact, they provide visual proof and symbolic evidence. If Egyptian women want to claim their place as citizens, socially equal to men, they will have to work together across all social boundaries. Since this has not yet occurred in any patriarchal society, it might mean that women will have to cooperate collectively on a global level, but that's another story!

Chapter Eight End Notes

1

For a discussion about the "*khawāgah* complex", see Lindisfarne (1997) and El-Messīrī (1978).

2

See Mernīssī (1993a), Robins (1993), Tyldesley (1994), and Walther (1993).

3

See L. 'Ahmed (1986), Badran (1985), Mernīssī (1993a), and Sabbah (1984).

4

See Featherstone (1995), Featherstone, *et al.* (1995), Förnas (1995), Friedman (1995), and El-Sa'adāwī (1997).

5

See End Note 4.

6

See End Note 4.

7

See Bramberg (1995), S. 'Ibrahīm (1993 and 1995a), and Makram-Ebeid (1989).

8

See Arebi (1991), El-Messīrī (1978), Rugh (1984), El-Solh and Mabro (1994),and Sayigh (1981).

9

See Hinnebusch, Jr. (1988b), Makram-Ebeid (1989 and 1993), Mann (1992), Moore (1974 and 1986), and Springborg (1987 and 1989).

10

Edward Sa'īd (1998a) recently complained bitterly about the lack of solidarity amongst Palestinians in the face of constant aggression by the state of Israel. Furthermore, he chastised Arab states for their lack of solidarity with Palestinians as well as amongst themselves in the face of Western neo-imperialism. He also complained about the individualism and lack of solidarity amongst the *nouveau riche* in the Arab world, those whose meteoric amassing of wealth during the 1970's and 1980's has enabled them to lead a life of leisure and disengagement from community. Though most of them had a relatively low social status, they have not become social activists concerned with the well-being of those they left behind.

> Huge weddings take place every day in the luxury hotels of those capitals, young people drive their BMWs and Honda motorcycles...and the impression is that of a long day-dream, with not much thought given either to the past or the future. Filled with pleasant interludes, school years in Harvard or Georgetown, vacations in Gstaad and Cannes, careers in advertising, marketing, investment, or construction, the privileged generation of Palestinian -- and indeed Arab -- youth, whose parents made their fortunes in the easy days of the Gulf oil and construction boom, go about their lives in a never-never land of tax-free spending that has made it a class unique in the history of the twentieth century for its wastefulness and unproductivity. And it is this class that is theoretically entrusted with the future of our struggle against a ruthless and single-minded foe.

11

See Archer (1984), Bakan (1966), Brown and Williams (1984), and Williams (1984).

[12] See also Ramzī (1988):114.

[13] See Mitchell (1991), Morsy (1986), Sullivan (1987 and 1990), and World Bank (1991).

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Appendix 1

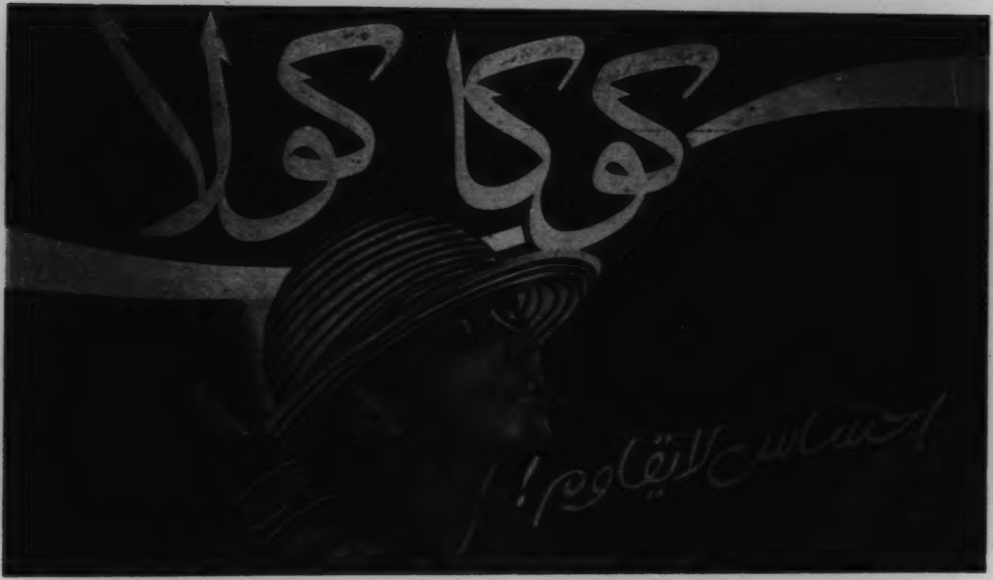
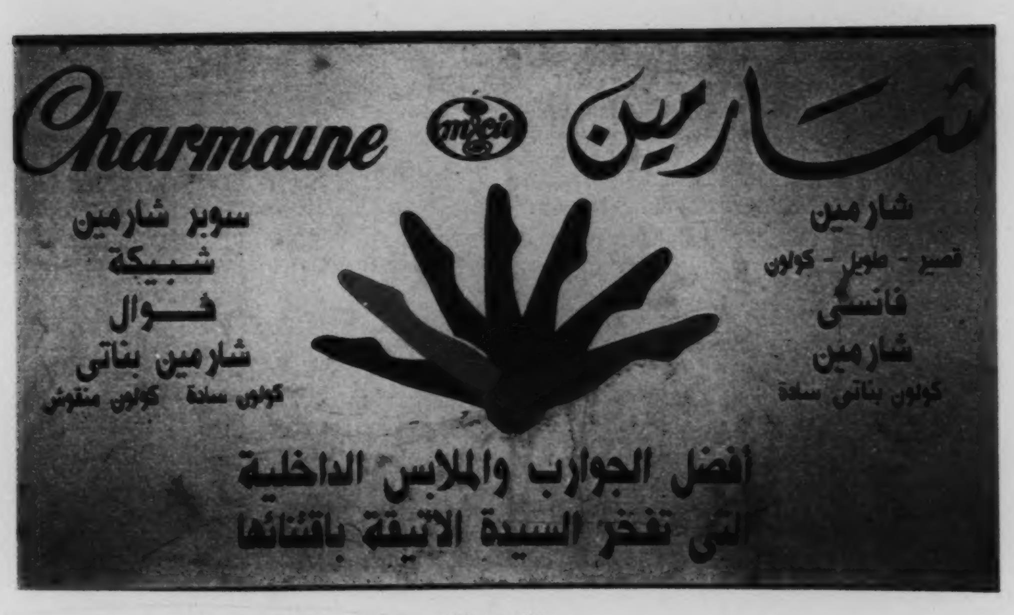

كوكا كولا
احساس لايقاوم !

Photo #1


شارمين
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شبيكة
فوال
شارمين بناتى
كولون سادة كولون منقوش
أفضل الجوارب والملابس الداخلية
التى تفخر السيدة الأنيقة باقتنائها

Photo #2

Photo #3

KATO SOAP
KATO SOAP & DETERGENTS
جيتار وعود
على الخدود

Photo #4

لولو
فوط صحية نسائية باللاصق
Loulou
الشركة العربية للمنتجات الورقية والصحية (كارم

Photo #6

الجمعية التعاونيه لصناع الاثاث القاهره

Photo #7

Photo #9

Photo #8

Carmen
كارمن

Photo #10

وجيد
نانين المتحدين

Photo #11

Photo #12

سماح انور
مدحت صالح
مطلوب

Photo #13

Photo #14

Photo #17

Photo #15

الفرقة الغنائية الاستعراضية

Photo #16

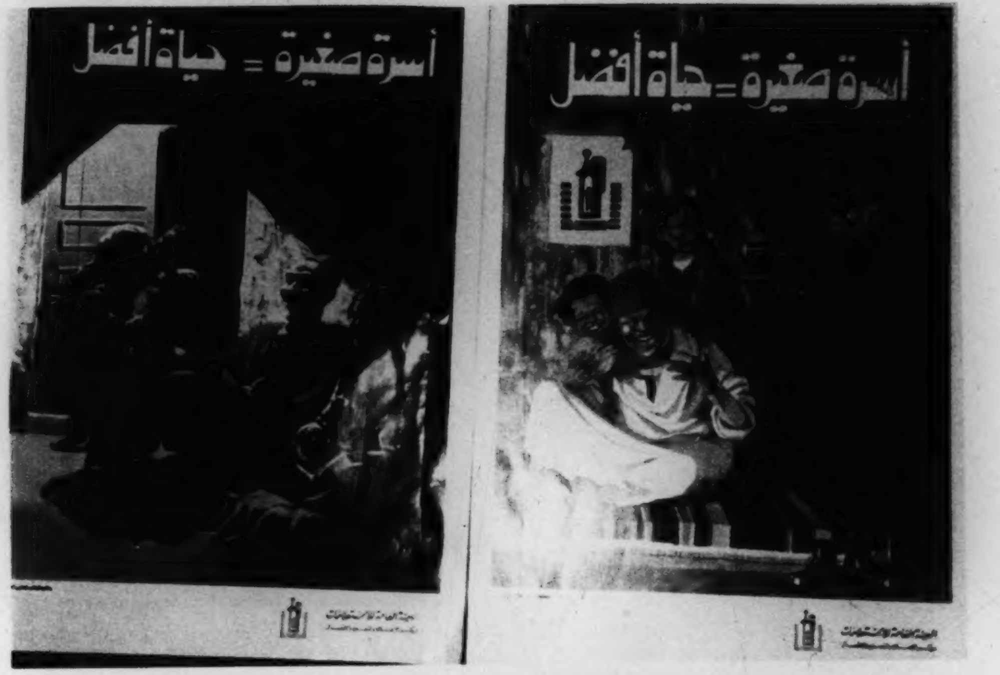
أسرة صغيرة = حياة أفضل
أسرة صغيرة = حياة أفضل

Photo #18

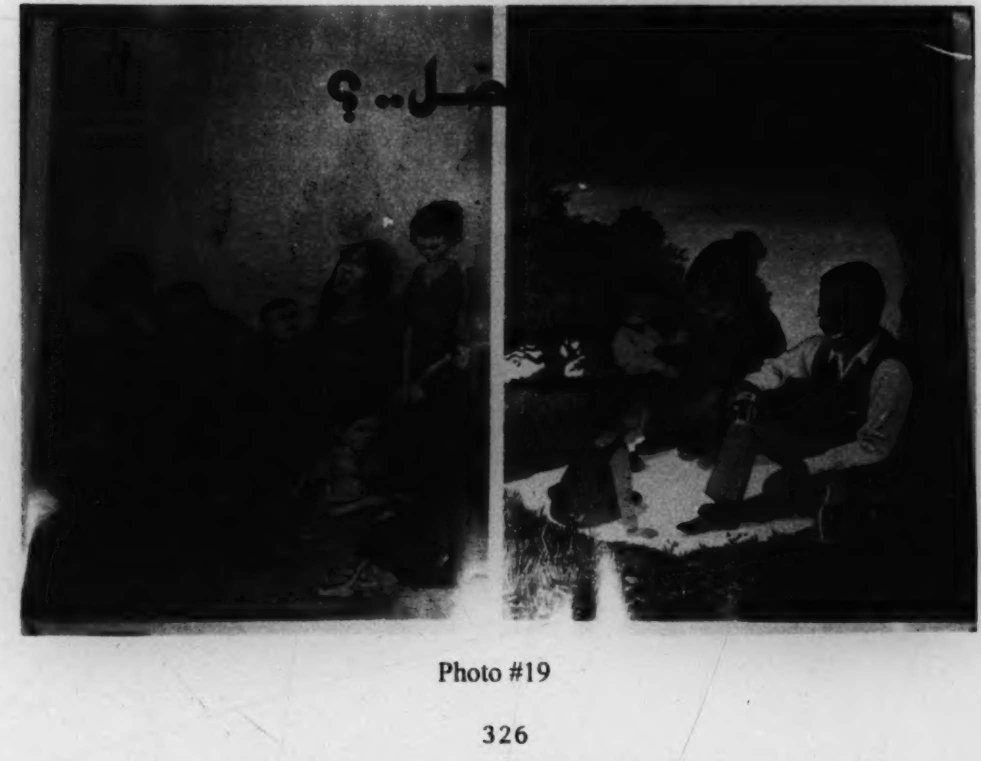

Photo #19

Photo #20

طول ما معايا بطاقة..

Photo #21

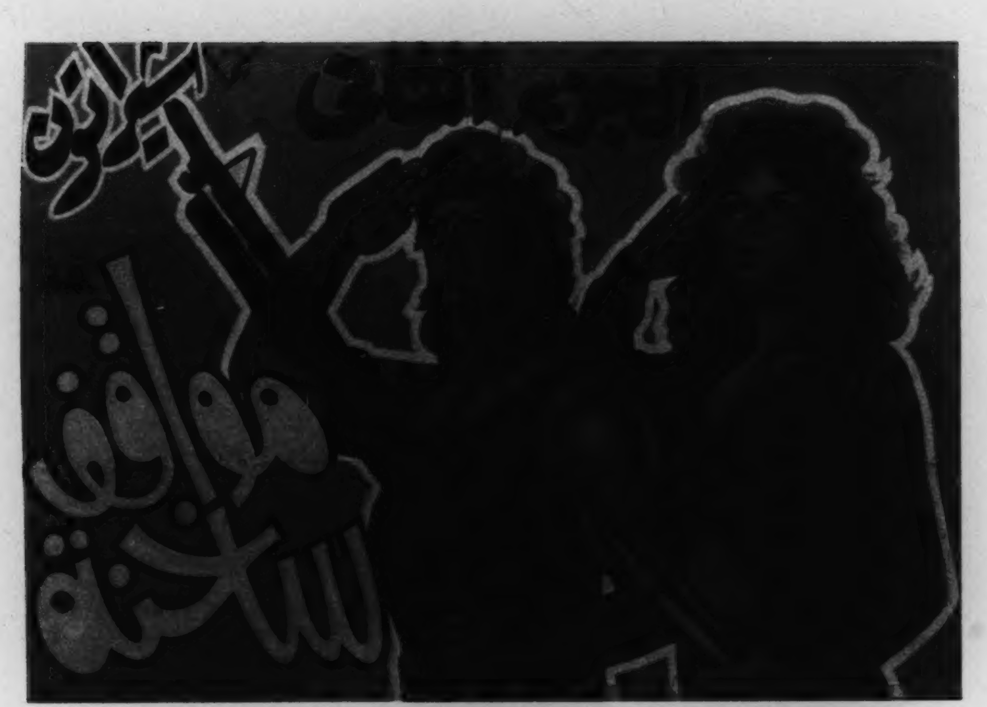
مواقف ساخنة

Photo #22

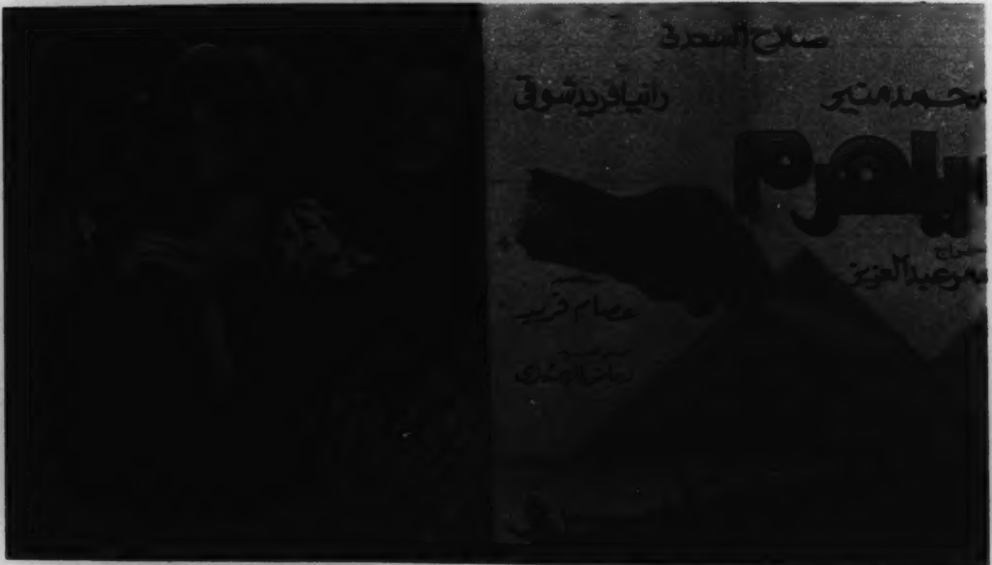
صلاح السعدني
محمد منير
رانيا فريد شوقي
عبد العزيز
عصام فريد

Photo #23

النجمة الاستعراضية

Photo #24

ماتهونش عليا

Photo #25

Photo #26

ليلى علوى
محمود حميدة
أشرف عبد الباقي
أحمد آدم
بالطاعة
إخراج
عاطف الطيب

Photo #27

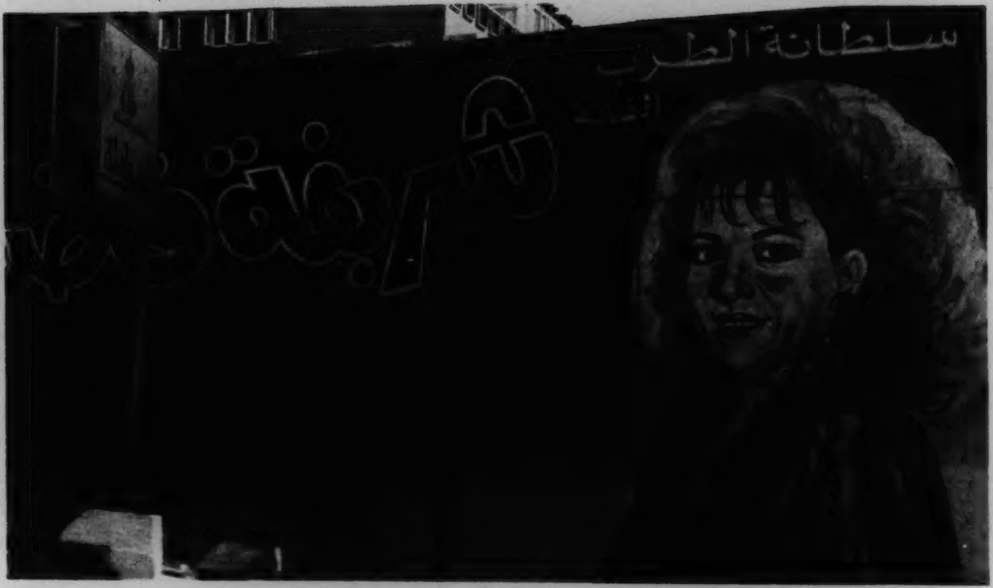
سلطانة الطرب

Photo #28

Photo #29

نادية الجندي
خمسة باب
عادل امام
روكسي
مترو
فؤاد المهندس

Photo #30

Photo #31

هدية العيد
فاتن حمامه
فيفي عبده
هشام عبد الحميد
يوسف شعبان
حنان شوقي
نهله سلامه
سعيد عبد الغني
ميمي جمال
رجاء الجداوي
علاء ولي الدين
عادل الاعصر

Photo #32

Photo #33

قصر النيل
فاتن حمامة
بيجال

Photo #34

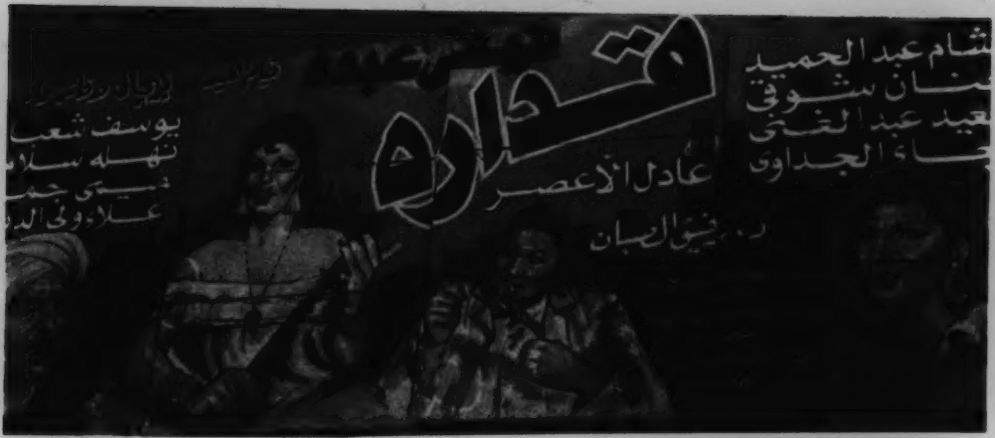
قداره
عادل الأعصر
يوسف شعب
نهله سلا
شام عبد الحميد
نان شوقي
عيد عبد الغني
اء الجداوي

Photo #35

Appendix 2
Description of the Billboard Ads

Photograph #1

This is an advertisement for "Coca Cola". The large writing says, "Coca Cola" and the smaller writing says, "Irresistible Feeling". It was painted on wood at an outdoor metro (subway train) station platform. Although this was a common ad in greater Cairo, it was unique in that it was the only billboard ad by a multinational corporation which depicted a woman.

Photograph #2

This is an advertisement for an Egyptian company named "Charmaine" which produces underwear, socks, and stockings for adults and children. It depicts upside-down legs below the knee, each one wearing a different colored stocking, in a fan-like arrangement. It is painted on metal at an outdoor metro (subway train) station platform, though it was common in greater Cairo. Because this ad violates Egyptian norms of decency, it was usually spray-painted to cover the legs and/or words such as *'ayb* ["shame"] were written across it.

Photograph #3

This is an advertisement for a *muḥaggabāt* clothing company which has two stores in Muhandisīn, an upper middle class suburb of Cairo. It was painted on metal on a pole outside the Mubārak metro (subway train) station at Ramsīs Square, near downtown Cairo, and was common throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #4

This is an advertisement for "*Oui*" soap which is produced in Egypt. It was glued to a wood surface in the underground Sadāt metro (subway train) station at Tahrīr Square in the heart of downtown Cairo, and it was common throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #5- #6

This is an advertisement for the Egyptian company which manufactures sanitary napkins under the brand name "Loulou". It consisted of several metal panels rivetted together. It was on the main intersection of Qasr al-'Aini Street and the Corniche an-Nīl near downtown Cairo. It was one of the largest ads in Cairo and had been there for several years. Smaller versions of this ad were common throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #7

This is an advertisement for a producer cooperative which made furniture for the lower middle class. It depicts a bride and groom and is painted onto the brick building which houses the show rooms, located right at the corner of the Corniche an-Nīl and Qasr al-'Aini Street, near the heart of downtown Cairo. It was not found elsewhere.

Photograph #8

This is an advertisement for a small shop which sells eyeglasses and sunglasses. Located on a lamp post in Falakī Square in central Cairo, it depicts a woman from the waist up wearing sunglasses. It was also found in locations around downtown Cairo.

Photograph #9

This is an advertisement for a shop which sells eyeglasses and contact lenses. The ad is located on a light pole right outside the shop in Falakī Square in central Cairo. It was not found in other locations.

Photograph #10

This is an ad for a well-known Egyptian company which produces paper products under the brand name "Carmen". It is painted onto the bricks on the outside of an apartment building, five stories high and one apartment wide, located on Qasr al-'Aini Street near downtown Cairo. The ad depicts a woman gazing over toilet paper and paper napkins. The ad is commonly found throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #11

This is an advertisement for a musical which is a historical stage play, "*Shāriah* Muhammad 'Alī" ("Muhammad 'Alī Street") starring the famous entertainer Sharihān, and famous actors, Farīd Shawqi and Hisham Sālim. Sharihān is known for her elaborate, expensive costumes and creative choreography. It was glued onto wood and appeared on Tahrīr Street just off Tahrīr Square near the American University in downtown Cairo. Sharihān's spine was broken in a car accident and she was hospitalized in France for two years, making a remarkable full recovery and come-back, much to the relief of her fans but much to the chagrin of many others who consider her immoral. The ad appeared throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #12

This is an ad for the movie, "*Ḍaḥk, Li'ab, Gad, wa Ḥub*" ("Laughter, Play, Seriousness, and Love"), starring famous actors Yusrā and 'Umar Sharīf and pop star 'Amr Dīāb. It was paper glued to metal and appeared in Garden City near the Meridian Hotel on the Cornice an-Nīl in central Cairo. (Other ads for this same movie appear in photos #14 and #17.) This ad was found throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #13

This is an advertisement for a musical stage play called, "*Maṭlūb Zawguh Fawran*" ("Wanted: To Get Married Immediately/He Has To Marry Soon To Save Mankind"). It is a comedy written by famous writers Nabīl 'Ismat, with music by the famous composer, Farūq Sharnūbī, and starring famous actors Samāh 'Anwār and Midhat Sālih, and the less famous actors, Muhammad Farīd and Muhammad Yūsuf. Midhat Sālih is also a famous singer and Samāh 'Anwār can sing and dance. This play is very funny, but also sarcastic and with a serious message. The story line is about a bomb killing all but one man. The women survived and all beg him to marry them so the world can continue. It was painted onto many pieces of metal which were rivetted together and appeared on Ramsīs Street near the Mubārak metro station on Ramsīs Square near downtown Cairo and was found throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #14

The top ad is for the same movie as advertised in photos #12 and #17, "*Ḍaḥk, Li'ab, Gad, wa Ḥub*" ("Laughter, Play, Seriousness, and Love"), starring Yusrā, 'Amr Dīāb, and 'Umar Sharīf. It was painted on metal and appeared on Gīzah Square near Cairo University, but also found throughout greater Cairo.

The lower ad is for a stage play, "*Ḥub fī-l-Takhshībah*" ("Love in the Remand Center"), starring the famous actors Dalāl 'Abd-al-'Azīz, George Sidhum, and new actor, Husham 'Abd-al-Hamīd. It is directed by Samīr Sayf. The ad is painted onto metal and appears on Gīzah Square near Cairo University was but also found throughout greater Cairo.

Photographs #15-#16

This is an advertisement for a stage play called "*Khadīwī*" ("Khedive" or "Viceroy") being performed at the government-owned Ballūn Theatre. It depicts the two starring famous stage actors, Samīha 'Ayyūb and Mahmūd Yassīn. Samīha 'Ayyūb, who is at least seventy years old, is often referred to as the "Queen of the Stage". The play received excellent reviews. Apparently, while on stage, Samīha 'Ayyūb lectured the audience about nationalism and was critical of the government about contemporary issues outside of her part, including making fun of politicians and showing large placards depicting the heads of Arab and Western governments, which some respondents found objectionable. Russian ballet dancers also appeared in the play. The tickets are cheaper than at the private theatres, but the historical nature of the play and the classical Arabic (*fusḥā*) in which it is delivered would likely attract only elderly, well-educated, elite Egyptians. The play is written by Farūq Gīda and much of it is in poetry. The map of Egypt, the star depicted as the ruler, and the flag project the historical nature of the play. Ironically, the flag depicted is a modern one, not the historical one which was green and had three stars. The ad appeared on Ramsīs Street near the Mubārak metro station on Ramsīs Square near downtown Cairo, but was also found throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #17

This ad is for the same movie as advertised in photos #12 and #17, "*Ḍaḥk, Li'ab, Gad, wa Ḥub*" ("Laughter, Play, Seriousness, and Love"), starring Yusrā, 'Amr Dīāb, and 'Umar Sharīf. It was painted onto metal and appeared on Ramsīs Street near the Mubārak metro station on Ramsīs Square near downtown Cairo and found throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #18

This is a set of posters used in a national family planning campaign in Egypt during the mid-1980's. They are still hanging in and around family planning clinics but are no longer common on billboards. They were painted by the famous cartoonist with the daily paper, *al-Akhbār al-Yūm*, Mustāfā Husayn. The one on the left depicts a peasant farmer (*fallāḥ*) and his family who are wearing clothing typical of people in the Delta (North or Lower Egypt). The one on the right depicts a peasant farmer (*Sa'īdī*) and his family who are wearing clothing typical of people in the *Sa'īd* (South or Upper Egypt). The intention is for illiterate peasants to believe that life will be much better for them and their children if they have only two children; however, the majority of peasants would, in fact, feel sorry for the families depicted because they did not have many children. Furthermore, peasant families are unlikely behave as they are depicted in the posters.

Photograph #19

This is another set of posters used in a national family planning campaign in Egypt during the 1980's and still hang in and around family planning clinics, though no longer common on billboards. They were also painted by the famous cartoonist with the daily paper, *al-Akhbār al-Yūm*, Mustāfā Husayn. The one on the left depicts a poor family with children, which is not a large number of children for such a family. Nevertheless, they are all depicted as malnourished, extremely thin, sick, and looking very miserable. The woman is pregnant. The poster on the right depicts a middle or upper-middle class couple with two children having a picnic. The woman has red hair, which makes her a very appealing beauty, but even elite Egyptians rarely have picnics. This is simply not an Egyptian habit.

Photograph #20

This is an ad for an Egyptian company which manufactures casual clothing, including blue jeans, for men, women, and children under the brand name "Līna". It was painted onto several metal panels which were rivetted together and appeared on Gamā'a Street near Cairo University in Gīzah, though they were also common throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #21

This is an ad for a company called “Blanco” which manufactures blankets. The message says, “You don’t need a heater so long as you have Blanco,” which many Egyptians found obscene. It was painted onto metal and appeared in the Sadāt underground metro station at Tahrīr Square in downtown Cairo, but was also found throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #22

This is an ad for the American movie, “Hot Shots, Part II” and was painted onto several panels of metal rivetted together. It appeared on the square outside the Cairo Sheraton Hotel in Duqqi, Gīzah. It was not found elsewhere, probably because it violated Egyptian norms of decency.

Photograph #23

This is an ad for the movie, “*Lay, Yā Haram*?” (“Why, Oh, Pyramid?), starring the famous actors Mirvat ‘Amīn, Salah Sa‘adānī, Farīd Shawqī and his less well-known daughter, Rania as well as the Nubian singer, Muhammad Munīr. It was painted onto numerous metal panels which were rivetted together and appeared in Garden City on the Cornice an-Nīl near the Meridian Hotel in downtown Cairo, but was also found throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #24

This is an ad for the belly dancer, Dīna, painted onto several metal panels rivetted together on al-Haram Street in al-Haram and not found in other locations. It was an extremely large ad, covering the entire side of an apartment building. Dīna has a master’s degree in dance and recreates (choreographs) Pharaonic dances. She is also thin, unlike other Egyptian belly dancers.

Photograph #25

This is an advertisement for the latest audio cassette of the relatively new and not well known singer, Nadia Rushdi. The ad is painted onto several metal panels which are rivetted together and appeared on the square outside the Cairo Sheraton Hotel in Duqqi, Gīzah, though it also appeared throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #26

This is an advertisement for Warda’s latest songs on audio cassette. Her latest hit song, “*Ḥarām Taḥibbak*” (“It Is Forbidden to Love You”). Warda is an Algerian who has been living in Egypt for about thirty years. She is a famous and very popular singer. The ad was painted onto several metal panels, rivetted together, which appeared in Garden City on the Cornice an-Nīl near the Meridian Hotel in downtown Cairo, but was also common throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #27

The top ad is for the Tunisian singer, Latīfa. It was the smallest billboard ad in Cairo depicting a woman. She is very popular in Egypt, but was forcibly deported in 1994 under suspicion of having AIDS, though she was known to be dating one of President Mubarak’s sons.

The bottom ad is for the movie, “‘*Indhār bi-Ṭā‘ah*” (“Notification of Order of Obedience”), starring the famous actors Laila ‘Alwī and Mahmūd Hamīda. It was directed by ‘Atīf at-Tayyib. Both ads were glued to wood and appeared in Garden City on the Cornice an-Nīl near the Meridian Hotel in downtown Cairo. Both ads were also found throughout central Cairo.

Photograph #28

This ad is for the nightclub, "*al-Layl*" ("The Night"), owned by the famous singer, Sharīfa Fadl, who is also depicted in the ad. It is painted onto several metal panels, rivetted together, and appeared in Garden City on the Cornice an-Nīl near the Meridian Hotel in downtown Cairo as well as throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #29

This is an advertisement for the latest hit song, ("A Moment of Silence") of ʻĀysha al-Waʻad. She is a relatively new and not well known singer whose voice, singing style, and songs are very similar to those of ʻUmm Kalthūm. Many of her songs are composed by the famous Farūq Sharnūbī. Her second name is definitely not an Egyptian name, and neither is the spelling of her first name. None of the respondents knew her nationality, but she is definitely not Egyptian. Her dress is also very atypical of singers. She is probably Maghrebi. The ad is painted onto several metal panels rivetted together and appeared in Garden City on the Cornice an-Nīl near the Meridian Hotel in downtown Cairo and was also found throughout greater Cairo.

Photograph #30

This is an ad for the movie, "*Khamsah Bāb*" ("Five Doors"), starring the famous actors Nadia al-Gindī, ʻAdil 'Imām, and Fuʻād al-Muhandis. It is a remake of the American movie, "Irma La Duce", but set in Cairo during the 1940's. It was banned shortly after it came out and producers spent more than ten years petitioning the courts to release it, which they finally did as I began my field work. This ad was painted onto several metal panels, rivetted together and appeared in Muhandisīn as well as throughout greater Cairo. (Photos #31 and #33 also advertise this movie).

Photograph #31

This ad is for the movie, "*Khamsah Bāb*" ("Five Doors"), as described for photo #30. It is also painted onto many sheets of metal rivetted together and appeared in Muhandisīn and throughout greater Cairo. It was the most obscene ad of all, according to the respondents, many of whom refused to look at it. (Photo #33 is also for this movie.)

Photograph #32

This is an ad for the movie, "*Qadārah*" ("The Commander"), starring Fīfī ʻAbdū, who is a famous belly dancer and more recently, actor. Hanān Shawqī and Hisham ʻAbd-al-Hamīd also appear in this movie. This particular movie is actually a true story about a *baladī* woman who was *muʻallimah.* She lured young adolescent girls away from their families and forced them to work as prostitutes while she ran a *shīshah* shop and engaged in illegal drug trade. She had been arrested and tried about eighteen months before the movie came out, yet only one respondent knew that it was a true story, and she had only high school education. She was also the only respondent to actually have seen the movie, because she was curious about the facts. It was painted onto several metal panels, rivetted together and appeared in Muhandisīn and also throughout greater Cairo. (Photos #34 and #35 are also for this movie.)

Photograph #33

These ads appear on the front of the theatre showing the movie, "*Khamsah Bāb*" ("Five Doors"), as described for photo #30. The theatre is located on Talāt Harb Street in downtown Cairo and is frequented only by lower middle class men. This ad was common in central Cairo.

Photograph #34

This is an ad for the movie, "*Qadārah*" ("The Commander"), as described for photo #32. It was glued to several metal panels, rivetted together, and appeared on Qasr al-'Aini Street near downtown Cairo but was also common throughout central Cairo.

Photograph #35

This is another advertisement for the movie, "*Qadārah*" ("The Commander"), as described for photo #32. It was painted onto several metal panels rivetted together and appeared on the Cornice an-Nīl near the Meridian Hotel in Garden City, downtown Cairo, but also appeared throughout central Cairo. (See also photo #34.)

Appendix 3

EGYPTIAN WOMEN AND GENDER

I. Demographic and Socio-Economic Information

1. Case I.D. No. 2. Year of Birth? 3. Marital Status?

4. Age at Marriage? 5. No. of Children Born?

6. Number of Children Survived Childhood? 7. Times Married?

8. Functionally illiterate or literate? 9. Highest Education?

10. Type of Primary, Preparatory and High School Attended?

    Public (Gov't) or Private?

    Religious or "Mixed/Regular"?

    Sex-Segregated or Co-educational?

    Commuted or Boarded

    Egyptian or Foreign Language School -- Language(s):

11. Language of Instruction/Languages Learned in School?

12. Country/Governorate/City/District of High School attended?

13. Languages spoken? 14. Oral proficiency in languages other than Arabic?

15. Currently a student? 16. If yes, where? Studying what at what level?

16. Travelled Outside Egypt? If so, where and in what capacity?

17. Travelled to West? If so, where and in what capacity?

18. Works for Wages Outside House? Never Sometimes Usually Retired

19. Currently works Outside House? Never Sometimes Usually Retired

20. Worked before and/or after marriage?

21. Currently works? Part-time or Full-time or Retired or Never worked

22. Employed in Public or Private Sector or Both and/or Self-Employed?

23. Has her own money?

24. Has control over her own money?

25. Spends some of her own money on necessary domestic and subsistance expenses?

26. If yes, how does the respondent feel about this?

27. Primary Occupation?

28. Employs servants? 29. If yes, how many and what are they employed to do?

30. Sends/sent children to nursury school or day-care center?

31. Babysits her own grandchildren on regular basis?

32. Usual Dress Style in Public?

33. Religion? 34. Interpretation and Practices of religion?

35. Country/Governorate/City of Birth? If Cairo, district?

36. Ethnicity?

37. Year of Husband's Birth? 38. Husband's Highest Level of Education?

39. Husband Studied Abroad? If so, where and when? What did he study? Degrees?

40. Husband's Occupation?

41. Husband's Employment Status: Full-time; Part-Time; Unemployed; Retired

42. Husband's Employment Sector? Public or Private or Both and/or Self-Employed

43. Husband worked outside Egypt at one time? 44. If yes, where did he work?

45. If yes, he worked abroad for how long?

46. If yes, he worked during which years abroad?

47. Family's monthly living expenditures?

48. Type of housing? 48. District of Residence in Cairo?

50. Shares housing? If so, with whom? 51. Who owns housing?

52. Monthly rent or mortgage?

53. Husband owns car? 54. Woman owns car?

55. Respondent prefers to use what type of transportation?

56. Prefers to to drive self or be driven by whom?

57. Age of Children? 58. Sex of children?

59. Children attend(ed) what type of schools?

Public or Private Schools or Foreign Arab Schools or Foreign European Schools
or Foreign North American Schools

60. Children attend(ed) what type of schools?

Religious or "Regular" Schools or Both or *Namūsagīyah*

61. Children are tutored by private teachers?

62. Children speak or are learning what languages?

63. Father's Highest Level of Education? 64. Father's Main Occupation?

65. Father worked in Public or Private sector or Both or Self-employed?

66. Number of times father was married?

67. Number of brothers? 68. Number of sisters?

69. Number of half-brothers? 70. Number of half-sisters?

71. Father is alive or deceased?

72. Mother's highest level of Education?

73. Mother's Main Occupation?

74. Mother worked in Public or Private sector or Both or Self-employed or Stayed home?

75. Number of children born to mother?

76. Number of mother's children which survived childhood?

77. Mother was/is a member of a women's group?

78. Mother believed in equal (SAME) rights and responsibilities for men and women?

79. Mother is alive or deceased?

80. Respondent is a member of a women's group? 81. If yes, women's group is Religious or Secular?

82. Women's group is self-described as feminist? 83. Name of women's group(s)?

II. Respondent's Perception of Photographs

1. Photograph chosen first?

    Order of other photographs chosen?

2. Respondent's comments about the image of the woman in each photograph?

    a. What did the images of women mean to the respondent?

    b. Was her overall reaction to each photograph Approval or Disapproval or Ambivalence?

3. Respondent's interpretation of the message of each billboard?

    a. Was her overall reaction to this message Approval or Disapproval or Ambivalence?

4. Respondent's interpretation about the relationship of the image of the woman to what she thinks the message of each billboard is?

5. Respondent's understanding of the origin of the billboards?

6. Respondent's recall of seeing the billboards prior to this research?

7. Does she think the billboard is effective in transmitting the intended message?

8. What are her ideas about the billboards in general?

III. Respondent's Perception of Gender

1. Woman's primary role is mother and wife secondarily and should not work inside or outside house for money?

2. Woman's primary role is wife and mother secondarily and should not work inside or outside house for money ?

3. Woman's primary role is wife and mother but may work inside house for money if domestic duties are fulfilled first?

4. Woman's primary role is wife and mother but may work outside house if domestic duties are fulfilled first?

5. Woman's role(s) are a matter of individual choice by woman so long as her husband agrees?

6. Woman's role(s) are a matter of individual choice by the woman regardless of the opinion of others?

7. Women should be able to retain custody of her children until the age of at least 12 for girls and 10 for boys as specified in Islam unless she is proven to be unfit to do so (In this latter case, the onus is on the man to prove her unfit rather than her having to fight for custody in the first place)?

8. Men should do housework? If so, how much?

9. Men should take care of their children? If so, how much/how often?

10. Men are responsible for the support of the family financially, including housing, food, clothes, school expenses, etc.? If so, how much?

11. Husbands have the right to determine the wife's activities outside the home, such as employment and social activities?

12. A good wife is obedient to her husband because he is superior to her?

13. Women should include a clause in their marriage contract so as to be able to initiate divorce herself as specified in the *Qur'ān*?

14. Women should be able to initiate divorce without asking permission for this to be included in the marriage contract (perhaps a government law guaranteeing women the same right to divorce as men)?

15. Women should be able to participate fully in public life: work, travel, politics, etc.?

16. The most influential source of respondent's conception of gender is?

17. Respondent's ideas about gender have changed since adolescence? If so, how much?

18. Respondent's concept of gender is similar to her mother's? How? Why?

IV. My Interpretation of Respondent's Concept and Practice of Gender

(Contradictions? Self-reflective? Reasons expressed by respondent?)

V. My Evaluation of Reliability of Respondent's Information and General Comments About the Respondent